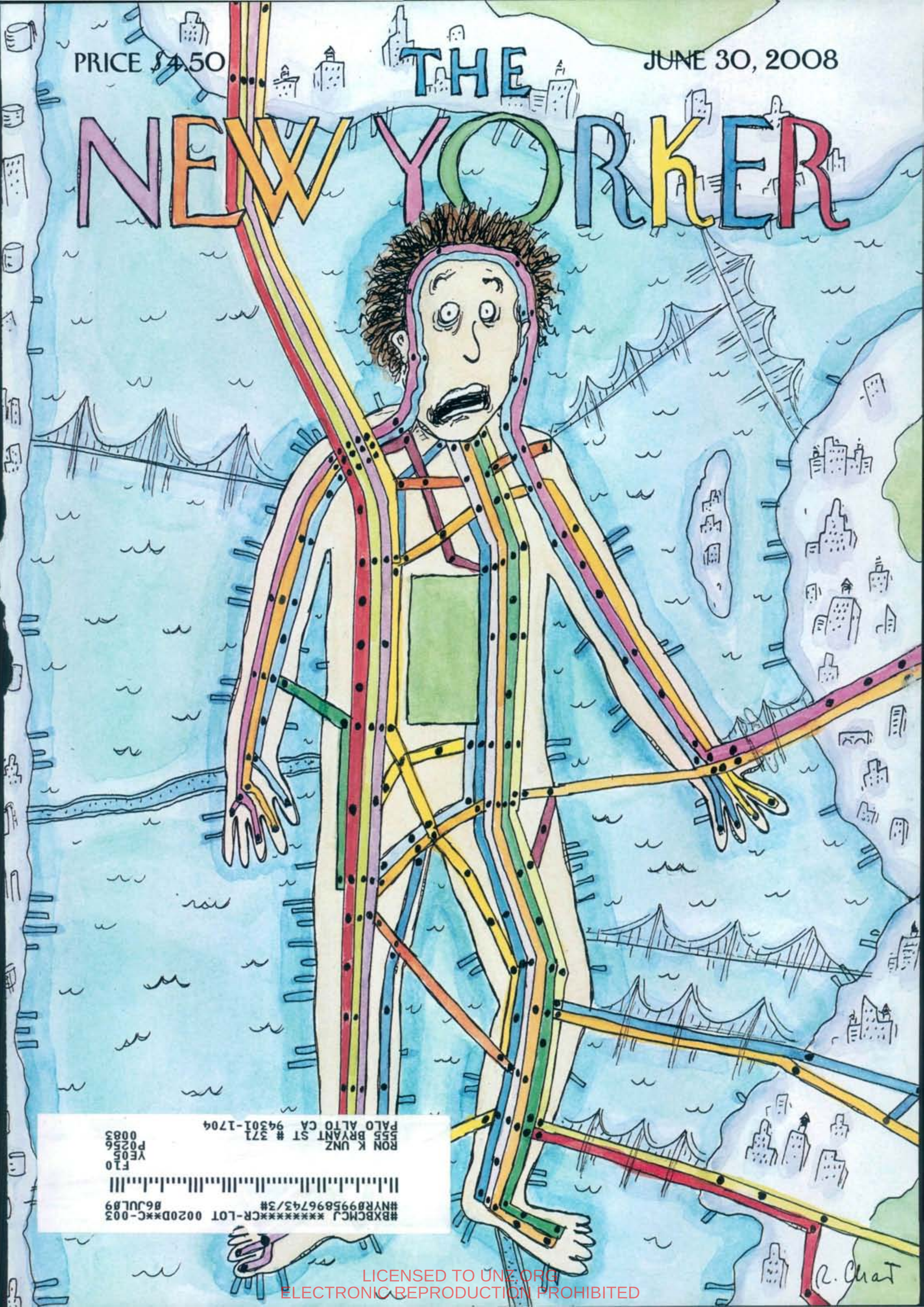
PRICE $4.50

JUNE 30, 2008

THE NEW YORKER



#BXBCMCJ ********CR-LOT 0020D**C-003
#NYR0995896743/3# 06JUL09
F10
YE05
P0256
0083
RON K UNZ
555 BRYANT ST # 371
PALO ALTO CA 94301-1704

HD Video Lens

DiG!C DV II

HD CMOS

CANON HD VIDEO LENS
ZOOM 4.8-57.6mm 1:1.8 ø37
POWER
Canon
HD

©2008 Canon U.S.A., Inc. All rights reserved. Canon, EOS and PowerShot are registered trademarks and VIXIA is a trademark of Canon Inc. in the United States. IMAGEANYWARE is a trademark of Canon.

LET YOUR MOST SPECTACULAR LIFE EXPERIENCES STAY THAT WAY.

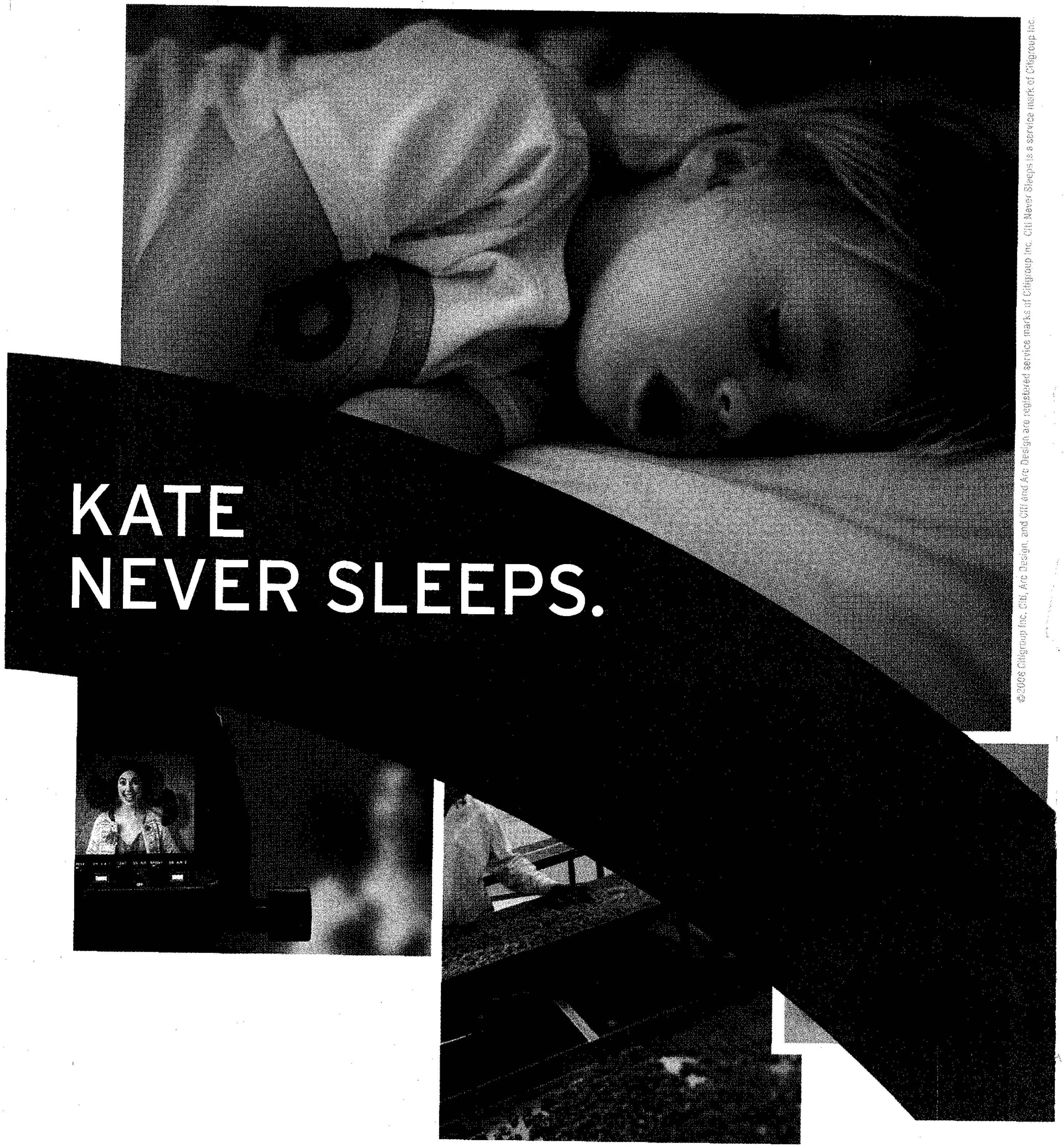
Every detail of your favorite memories is preserved with a Canon **VIXIA** High Definition camcorder. Thanks to legendary Genuine Canon optics and our latest HD technology, all of your videos will have unmatched image quality. With lush color and razor-sharp clarity, experience HD to its full 1920 x 1080 potential. Available in a range of recording formats, including Flash Memory. usa.canon.com/camcorder

SHOOT. CAPTURE. SEE. BE HD.

+ +

EOS PowerShot VIXIA HD

mageANYWARE


KATE
NEVER SLEEPS.

©2006 Citigroup Inc. Citi, Arc Design, and Citi and Arc Design are registered service marks of Citigroup Inc. Citi Never Sleeps is a service mark of Citigroup Inc.

Dreams. **Realities.**

After an evening of tantrums that shook the walls, Kate has finally begun to dream. >>> But down the hall, her father wonders how he'll afford to send her to college, while her mother considers a larger home. >>> Downtown, Kate's overworked pediatrician ponders an early retirement. >>> In Bentonville, a shipment of Kate's favorite peas arrives at the baby food bottling plant. >>> And in Sydney, a sing-along DVD is being filmed, one that'll provide Kate's grateful parents with a brand-new lullaby.

Every minute, Kate's world is being enhanced by those near and far. And every minute, Citi is helping. We're providing the college savings plan and the mortgage that'll give her family room to grow. We're enabling her doctor to plan for the future, helping the pea farmer and the food processor to reach new markets, and funding the Australian studio. It's an enormous undertaking. And an even bigger responsibility. Which is why, while Kate might sleep, we never do. citi.com/neversleeps

Citi never sleeps℠

citi®

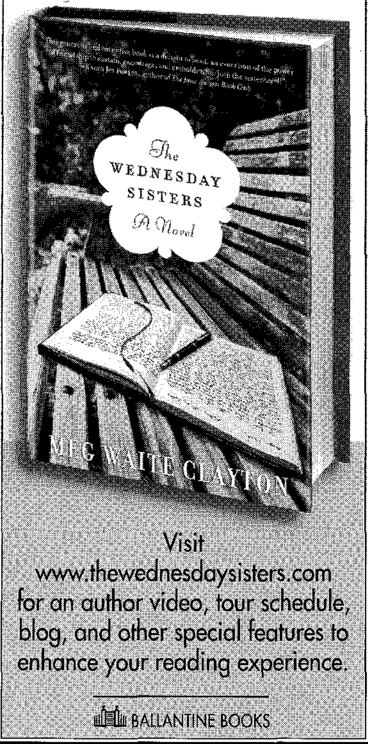
THE
WEDNESDAY
SISTERS
A Novel

MEG WAITE CLAYTON

"This book reminded me of why I love to read."
—LOLLY WINSTON, author of *Good Grief*

"An evocation of the power of friendship to sustain, encourage, and embolden us. **Join the sisterhood!"**
—KAREN JOY FOWLER, author of *The Jane Austen Book Club*

"An inspiring story for anyone who has dared to dream big."
—MICHELLE RICHMOND, author of *The Year of Fog*



Visit
www.thewednesdaysisters.com
for an author video, tour schedule,
blog, and other special features to
enhance your reading experience.

BALLANTINE BOOKS

THE NEW YORKER

JUNE 30, 2008

8 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
21 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
Dorothy Wickenden on the Obama puzzle; Gotham ginkgos; Martian ice.

Frances FitzGerald 28 ANNALS OF RELIGION
The New Evangelicals
A growing challenge to the religious right.

Simon Rich 35 SHOUTS & MURMURS
Animal Tales

Andrea Lee 36 PERSONAL HISTORY
Altered State
Scenes from a Pennsylvania girlhood.

Connie Bruck 42 THE WORLD OF BUSINESS
The Brass Ring
Sheldon Adelson's quest for global influence.

Atul Gawande 58 ANNALS OF MEDICINE
The Itch
A new science of scratching.

Alice Munro 66 FICTION
"Deep-Holes"

THE CRITICS

Pankaj Mishra 74 BOOKS
Ma Jian's "Beijing Coma."
77 Briefly Noted

Paul Goldberger 78 THE SKY LINE
New visions in the Beijing skyline.

John Lahr 80 THE THEATRE
"Hamlet" in the Park.

Nancy Franklin 82 ON TELEVISION
"Secret Diary of a Call Girl," "MVP."

Joan Acocella 84 DANCING
Twyla Tharp's "Rabbit and Rogue."

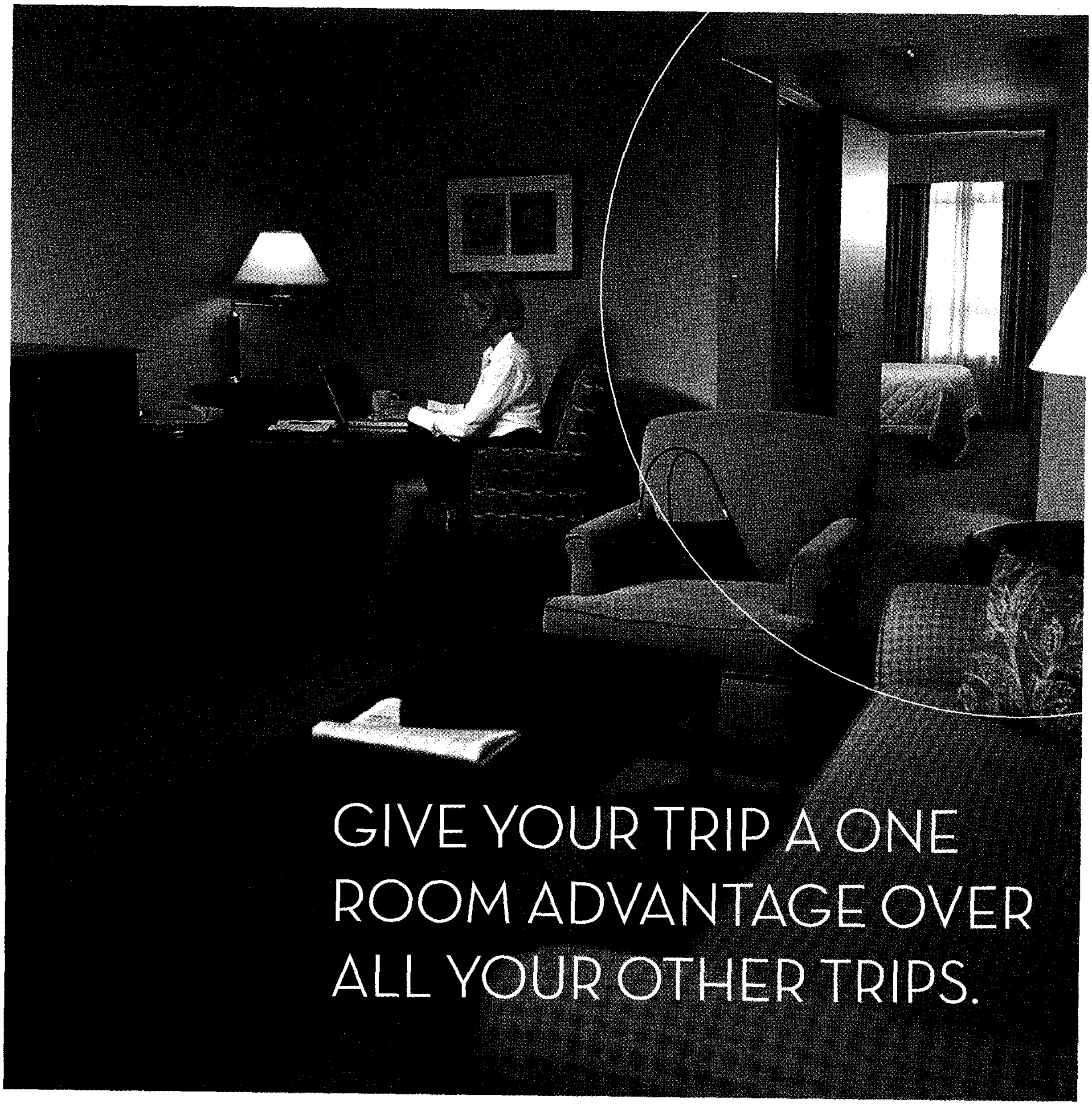
Anthony Lane 86 THE CURRENT CINEMA
"Wanted," "The Happening."

POEMS

Charles Wright 33 Two Poems
Karl Kirchwey 48 "Propofol"

COVER *"Subway Man," by Roz Chast* DRAWINGS *David Sipress, Frank Cotham, David Borchart, P. C. Vey, Lee Lorenz, Jack Ziegler, Matthew Diffee, Carolita Johnson, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Leo Cullum, Drew Dernavich, Liza Donnelly, Charles Barsotti* SPOTS *Anders Wenngren*

www.newyorker.com


GIVE YOUR TRIP A ONE ROOM ADVANTAGE OVER ALL YOUR OTHER TRIPS.

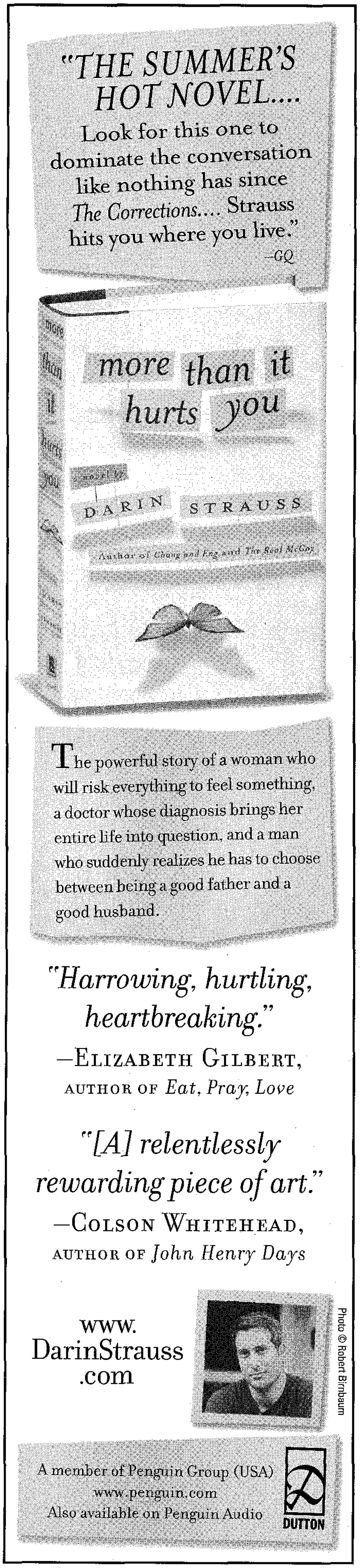
Next time you travel, bring along some extra space. At Embassy Suites Hotels,® every room is a spacious, two-room suite. It gives you freedom on the road and is just one of the many ways Embassy Suites puts extra thought into everything we do.

EMBASSY SUITES HOTELS®

The Hilton Family
Official Sponsor U.S. Olympic Team
USA

EMBASSY SUITES OFFERS COMPLIMENTARY, COOKED-TO-ORDER BREAKFAST, 2 TWO-ROOM SUITES, OPEN-AIR ATRIUMS AND EVENING MANAGER'S RECEPTION.* FOR LOCATIONS AND RESERVATIONS, **PLEASE VISIT EMBASSYSUITES.COM OR CALL 800-EMBASSY FOR OUR BEST RATES. GUARANTEED.**

*Subject to state and local laws. Must be of legal drinking age. ©2008 Hilton Hotels Corporation. 36USC220506


"THE SUMMER'S HOT NOVEL.... Look for this one to dominate the conversation like nothing has since *The Corrections*.... Strauss hits you where you live."
–GQ

more than it hurts you
a novel by
DARIN STRAUSS
Author of Chang and Eng and The Real McCoy

The powerful story of a woman who will risk everything to feel something, a doctor whose diagnosis brings her entire life into question, and a man who suddenly realizes he has to choose between being a good father and a good husband.

"Harrowing, hurtling, heartbreaking."
—ELIZABETH GILBERT,
AUTHOR OF *Eat, Pray, Love*

"[A] relentlessly rewarding piece of art."
—COLSON WHITEHEAD,
AUTHOR OF *John Henry Days*

www.
DarinStrauss
.com

Photo © Robert Birnbaum

A member of Penguin Group (USA)
www.penguin.com
Also available on Penguin Audio
DUTTON

CONTRIBUTORS

Connie Bruck ("The Brass Ring," p. 42) is a longtime *New Yorker* staff writer.

Dorothy Wickenden (Comment, p. 21) is the executive editor of the magazine.

Frances FitzGerald ("The New Evangelicals," p. 28) has published several books, including "Cities on a Hill" and "Way Out There in the Blue."

Charles Wright (Poems, p. 33) received a Pulitzer Prize in 1998 for his poetry collection "Black Zodiac." His book-length poem "Littlefoot" has just come out in paperback.

Simon Rich (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 35) has written two humor collections, "Ant Farm" and "Free-Range Chickens," which is due out in August.

Andrea Lee ("Altered State," p. 36) is the author of four books, including "Lost Hearts in Italy," a novel. Her work is included in the anthology "State by State: A Panoramic Portrait of America," which will be published in September.

Roz Chast (Cover) contributes regularly to the magazine. "Theories of Everything" is a collection of her work from 1978 to 2006.

Atul Gawande ("The Itch," p. 58) is an associate professor at Harvard Medical School and at the Harvard School of Public Health, and the author of "Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance."

Karl Kirchwey (Poem, p. 48), a poet and a translator, is the author of five books, including "The Happiness of This World: Poetry and Prose." He directs the Creative Writing Program at Bryn Mawr College.

Alice Munro (Fiction, p. 66) has published twelve short-story collections, including "The View from Castle Rock."

Pankaj Mishra (Books, p. 74) is the author of "The Romantics," a novel, and "Temptations of the West: How to Be Modern in India, Pakistan, Tibet, and Beyond."

John Lahr (The Theatre, p. 80), the magazine's senior drama critic, is working on a biography of Tennessee Williams. "Honky Tonk Parade: *New Yorker* Profiles of Show People" is his most recent book.

Joan Acocella (Dancing, p. 84) reviews books and dance for the magazine. Her collection of essays "Twenty-eight Artists and Two Saints" is available in paperback.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM
Dorothy Wickenden hosts the Campaign Trail podcast. / Audio: *Atul Gawande* discusses the science of itching. / More photographs of Beijing's CCTV building by *Iwan Baan.* / The Naked Campaign videos, featuring *Steve Brodner.* / Blogs: *Hendrik Hertzberg* and *George Packer* on politics, *Sasha Frere-Jones* on music, cartoons and photographs by *Michael Crawford,* the Book Bench, and Goings On. / From the archives: *Connie Bruck* on John McCain, *Jianying Zha* on Chinese real-estate moguls, and thousands of film reviews. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events.

THE MAIL

SEX AND THE CRITIC

Stirring though it was to hear Anthony Lane bemoan the state of women in the media, his attack on "Sex and the City" as retrograde might have been more effective had he not condescended to so many women in the process (The Current Cinema, June 9th & 16th). Not even the women sitting next to him at the screening were safe from his judgment, to say nothing of the overwhelmingly female fan base that placed the movie at No. 1 on its opening weekend. Sure, Carrie and her friends are far from perfect role models, but lots of women still like to watch them. Am I an unrepentant materialist if I smiled when Carrie got a big closet? Can't I harmlessly indulge in fantasies of traditional femininity while the predominantly male audience next door drools over candy-colored cars?
Annabeth Bondor-Stone
New York City

"Sex and the City" has always been, first and foremost, a story about the primacy of female friendships in women's lives. We seek love and companionship with men (and sometimes with women), but in the end it is our female friends who help us know ourselves, realize our paths, and fulfill our destinies. Lane refers to the heartbreaks in this film as a "serious threat" to the "characters' contentment." Yes, the events in the film would be a threat to anyone's contentment. But this film deals in forgiveness. And, while we are on the topic, forgive a girl for getting teary during a scene in which a woman comes into possession of her very first Louis Vuitton handbag. These things matter, too.
Carrie Murphy
Milwaukee, Wis.

BOOZY BEGINNINGS

Joan Acocella notes that "hangovers are probably as old as alcohol use, which dates back to the Stone Age" ("A Few Too Many," May 26th). But the biological basis of the hangover goes back even further. In "Descent of Man," Darwin states, "Many kinds of monkeys have a strong taste for . . . spirituous liquors." And he cites the reported effects of the monkeys' being exposed to strong beer—"cross and dismal . . . aching heads . . . a most pitiable expression"—as suggestive evidence for the evolutionary affinity between humans and primates. "These trifling facts prove how similar the nerves of taste must be in monkeys and man, and how similarly their whole nervous system is affected"—by alcohol.
Léo F. Laporte
Professor Emeritus, Earth Sciences
University of California, Santa Cruz
Redwood City, Calif.

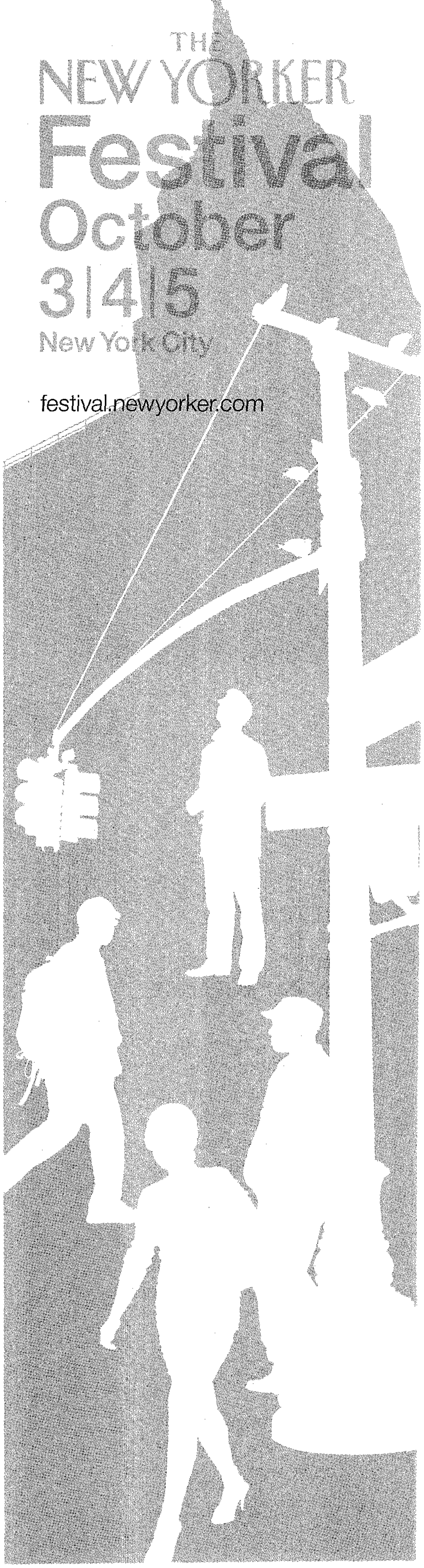
I liked both "hair ache" and "smacked from behind" as expressions for "hangover," but, on a linguistic note, want to add that a Hebrew word for drunkenness has existed since Genesis. After the flood, God goes on and on about how to live and avoid future punishment, ending in a compact epilogue. Noah and his family exit the ark in one sentence. Noah plants a vineyard in the next. And in the next (Genesis 9:21) he becomes *shikor:* "And he drank of the wine, and became drunk" (*vayishkar*). Noah was forgiven and went on to live three hundred and fifty more years, which led, via blessed and cursed sons and grandsons, inexorably to my grandfather in Sosnowiec, Poland, who when the snow was more than a foot deep on a winter morning had a shot of aqua vitae before putting on his *gatkes.*
Ehud Isacoff
Berkeley, Calif.

CORRECTION: The illustration accompanying The Theatre in the June 23rd issue was incorrectly credited; the artist was Joe Ciardiello.

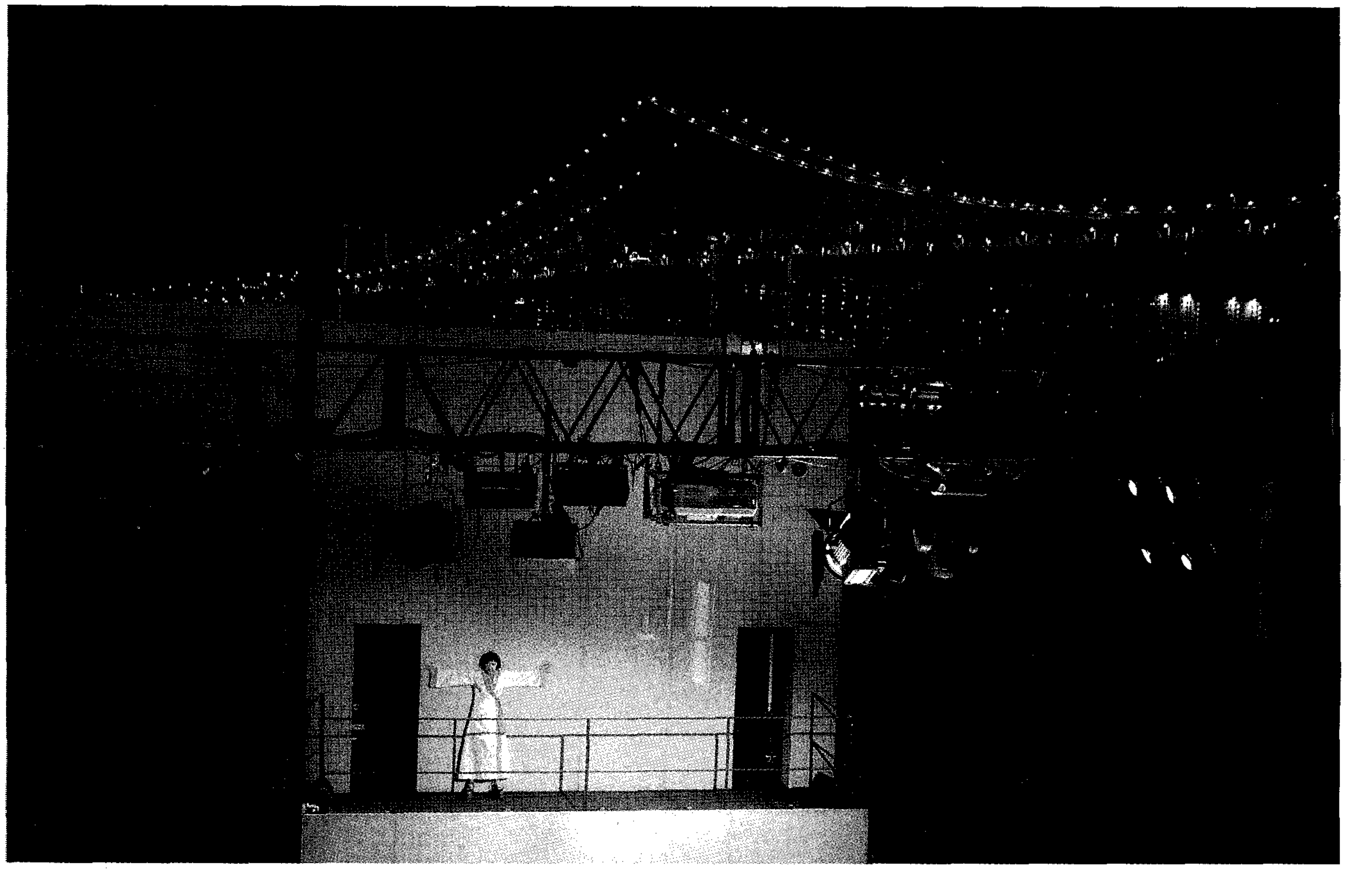
•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

Advertisement



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
29	30	1	25	26	27	28

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
IRONIC INTERLUDE

The long-running spoof show "Forbidden Broadway" has updated its program for its new edition, "Forbidden Broadway Dances with the Stars!" Sketches include satirical takes on Patti LuPone's portrayal of Momma Rose and the revival of "South Pacific." (See page 10.)

NIGHT LIFE
BACK IN EXILE

Fifteen years ago, the alternative rocker Liz Phair burst onto the scene with "Exile in Guyville," a clever début album full of shrewd songs and sexually frank lyrics that still resonate today. Phair went on to record more alternative rock, and then to embrace mainstream production and songwriting, but her fans have always associated her with her début, which she revisits, in its entirety, at the Hiro Ballroom. (See page 11.)

ART
SPIDER WOMAN

Since moving to New York from Paris, in 1938, Louise Bourgeois has been aligned with Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, and post-minimalism. But she may be best known for her spiders. The menacing steel arachnids in the Guggenheim's rotunda are featured in a retrospective of drawings, paintings, sculptures, and installations by the ninety-six-year-old artist. (See page 12.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
BERKSHIRE PRELUDES

The Tanglewood Festival always begins before its official opening night. This week includes performances by the Mark Morris Dance Group, the conductor James Levine, and the Boston Symphony Chamber Players. (See page 16.)

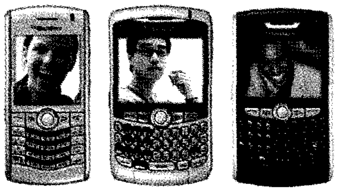
MOVIES
SPIRIT OF THE TIME

Zeitgeist Films, founded in 1988 by Nancy Gerstman and Emily Russo, has championed the work of an international roster of leading filmmakers, including Todd Haynes, Agnès Varda, Guy Maddin, and Jia Zhangke. Maddin kicks off MOMA's monthlong retrospective of the firm's offerings by presenting a pair of his own films ("The Heart of the World" and "Careful"). (See page 18.)

TR Warszawa's "Macbeth," at the Tobacco Warehouse. Photograph by Gus Powell.

Life On BlackBerry

BlackBerry



Connect to everything you love through the power of a BlackBerry® smartphone. Phone, email, browser, multimedia and more that fit seamlessly with your life.

BlackBerry.® The object for your desires.

©2008 Research In Motion Limited. All rights reserved. BlackBerry® and related trademarks, names and logos are the property of Research In Motion Limited and are registered and/or used in the U.S. and countries around the world. Screen images simulated.

BlackBerry®
www.blackberry.com

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

CIRQUE DREAMS "JUNGLE FANTASY"
Neil Goldberg created and directs this spectacle, which features aerialists, contortionists, acrobats, jugglers, and musicians in a jungle setting. In previews. Opens June 26. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY DANCES WITH THE STARS!
Spoofs include "South Pacific," Patti LuPone in "Gypsy," and "Grease." Opens June 28. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

Catherine Breillat's "The Last Mistress" opens June 27.

KICKING A DEAD HORSE
Sam Shepard wrote and directs this play, about a successful art dealer who wants to escape to the American West. Stephen Rea stars. Co-produced by the Abbey Theatre, in Dublin. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

LIFE IN A MARITAL INSTITUTION
James Braly's monologue, about the ups and downs of his twenty-year marriage, comes to SoHo Playhouse after a run at 59E59 earlier this year. Previews begin June 26. (15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555.)

MARIE ANTOINETTE: THE COLOR OF FLESH
Joel Gross wrote this play, a fictionalized story about a love triangle involving Marie Antoinette, her portrait painter Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, and Count Alexis de Ligne. Robert Kalfin directs, in repertory with "A Brush with Georgia O'Keeffe." Previews begin June 26. (St. Luke's, 308 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

MARKO THE PRINCE
Immigrants' Theatre Project presents the New York première of Jovanka Bach's drama, about an American who travels to a village on the border of Bosnia and Serbia to bury his mother. Trezana Beverley stars; Marcy Arlin directs. In previews. Opens June 26. (Barrow Group Theatre, 312 W. 36th St. 212-352-3101.)

THE MARRIAGE OF BETTE AND BOO
Roundabout Theatre Company presents Christopher Durang's dark comedy from 1985, about his parents' long history of alcoholism and nervous breakdowns. Walter Bobbie directs. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

POTOMAC THEATRE PROJECT
The company's season includes Howard Barker's "Scenes from an Execution," starring Jan Maxwell, Neal Bell's "Somewhere in the Pacific," and Sarah Kane's "Crave," in repertory. Opens July 1. (Atlantic Stage 2, at 330 W. 16th St. 212-279-4200.)

SOME AMERICANS ABROAD
Second Stage revives Richard Nelson's comedy from 1989, about a group of American college students who travel to England with their professors. Anthony Rapp and Tom Cavanagh are part of the ensemble cast. Gordon Edelstein directs. Previews begin June 26. (307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

SUMMER PLAY FESTIVAL
The Public and the Living Room for Artists join forces to present the fifth annual festival of new works, including the musical "The Black Suits," by Joe Iconis (music, lyrics, and book) and Rob Maddock (book). Opens July 1. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

NOW PLAYING

ARIAS WITH A TWIST
Back from a six-year stint in Vegas, the downtown drag cabaret singer Joey Arias vamps his way through an evening that evokes Bettie Page hosting a dirty "Muppet Show." In this case, the diva gets upstaged by the puppets—a fabulous big-band quartet in white tie and tails, a jungle wall of mischievous snakes and vines, and an entire miniature Art Deco New York skyline—designed and directed with wonder-inspiring precision by the über-puppeteer Basil Twist. The show's limitation is that Arias's campy vixen act (batting false eyelashes, dropping breathy one-liners, toying with dildos) can't match the inventiveness of Twist's mesmerizing backdrop, which also boasts psychedelic colored light projections and a mirrors-and-gams Busby Berkeley finale. (HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

BASH'D
A rap opera, written by and starring Chris Craddock and Nathan Cuckow (with music also by Aaron Macri), about a gay couple who retaliate when one of them is brutally beaten. Ron Jenkins directs. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-352-3101.)

THE COCKTAIL HOUR
Theatre Breaking Through Barriers (formerly Theatre by the Blind) presents A. R. Gurney's 1988 comedy, about John (Nicholas Viselli), a publisher and sometime playwright, who visits his aging, patrician parents and his sister to ask permission to stage a play he wrote about them. They discuss the matter during the family's traditional cocktail hour, an institution that has much to do with John's fond resentment of his parents and their way of life. The cast of four is strong, but the standout is Melanie Boland, as the mother, who not only comes across as the most sympathetic and the least self-pitying but also has the funniest lines—the often repeated "Just a splash more, I'm serious" among them. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through June 29.)

EDWARD ALBEE'S OCCUPANT
The great Russian-born American sculptor Louise Nevelson (1899-1988), the heroine of Edward Albee's play (a Signature Theatre Company production, directed by Pam MacKinnon), was from an early age lumbered by a sense of her own superiority. Albee's Nevelson (Mercedes Ruehl) is summoned from the grave to display her grandiosity, via her interviewer (Larry Bryggman). While she gave life to objects, Nevelson's sensational narcissism prevented her from giving much life to the world around her. In a head scarf, layers of gaudy fabric, and bulky jewelry, Ruehl puts a fine shine on the rebarbative spectacle that Nevelson made of herself, and manages to suggest Nevelson's chilliness as much as her charm, her dead heart as well as the life of her mind. Her characterization gives the illusion of substance to a vehicle that is really a graceful finger exercise. Albee writes a tight, limpid sentence with just enough wrinkle in it to give the flourish of the poetic. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/23/08.) (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

HAMLET
Shakespeare in the Park opens with the tragedy, staged by Oskar Eustis. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park, near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750. Through June 29.)

MACBETH
Poland's TR Warszawa presents the Shakespeare play, directed by Grzegorz Jarzyna, performed in a roofless theatre at the Tobacco Warehouse. A St. Ann's Warehouse production. In Polish, with English supertitles. (Adjacent to Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park, Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. Through June 29.)

OPH3LIA
An immigrant woman takes a vow of silence rather than be continuously misunderstood in a new language; a Korean schoolgirl at a Chinese international school suffers at the hands of her racist classmates; an interpreter for a bickering pair of artistic directors and an Argentinean playwright falls victim to their ideological war over the meaning of art. These three tales of isolated and emotionally repressed women are interwoven to occasional striking effect in this exploration of womanhood and of lives lived between various cultures. Unfortunately, the production, written and directed by Aya Ogawa, suffers from an overcrowding of ideas, and the thematic tying together of the disparate narratives via references to the Shakespearean heroine feels forced, giving the impression that the three strands might fare better performed separately. (HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

PALACE OF THE END
Epic Theatre Ensemble presents Judith Thompson's comic drama, about the Iraq war. Daniella Topol directs. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE PASSION PROJECT
Reid Farrington, a video-installation artist and frequent collaborator with the Wooster Group, directs this piece, which incorporates clips of Carl Theodor Dreyer's 1928 film "The Passion of Joan of Arc." (3LD Art & Technology Center, 80 Greenwich St. 212-352-3101.)

A PERFECT COUPLE
Amy (Dana Eskelson) and Isaac (James Waterston), the longtime best friends of Emma (Annie McNamara), are getting married, but they seem more concerned about Emma's bachelorette life style than about their own marital plans. They think Emma is fooling herself into spinsterhood with her romantic views of love, but, when Amy stumbles upon a passage in her future stepmother-in-law's old diary, she begins to wonder if she, too, has been deluding herself in matters of the heart. It takes far too long for Brooke Berman's twee drama about marriage and dating to pick up any momentum, and the direction seems stunted by the flat stage design and the even flatter dialogue. (DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

OUT OF TOWN

BAY STREET THEATRE
Charles Busch stars in his farce "Shanghai Moon," directed by Carl Andress, in which a married Englishwoman gets involved with a Chinese warlord. Through June 29. For more information, visit www.baystreet.org. (Sag Harbor, N.Y. 631-725-9500.)

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
Eric Hill directs Harold Pinter's "The Caretaker," from 1960, starring James Barry and Jonathan Ep-

JASHAR AWAN

stein, through June 28, and Anders Cato directs George Bernard Shaw's 1894 comedy, "Candida." For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. (Stockbridge, Mass. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
"Cymbeline," directed by Terrence O'Brien, plays on the tented outdoor stage at Boscobel, in repertory with "Twelfth Night." For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL
Campbell Scott stars in Ronan Noone's one-man drama, "The Atheist," on the Nikos Stage. On the Main Stage, beginning on June 27, Nicholas Martin directs "She Loves Me," a musical about anonymous pen pals who unwittingly work together. For a full festival schedule, visit www.wtfestival.org. (Williamstown, Mass. 413-597-3400.)

Also Playing

ADDING MACHINE: Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-4100. **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY:** Imperial, 245 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BOEING-BOEING:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COUNTRY GIRL:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 29. **GREASE:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **GYPSY:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **IN THE HEIGHTS:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200. **JOLLYSHIP THE WHIZ-BANG:** Ars Nova, 511 W. 54th St. 212-868-4444. **LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **THE LITTLE MERMAID:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747. **NOVEMBER:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **PASSING STRANGE:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **RAFTA, RAFTA . . .:** Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through June 28. **REASONS TO BE PRETTY:** Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200. **SOUTH PACIFIC:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 29. **THURGOOD:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **TOP GIRLS:** Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 29. **XANADU:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BAM RHYTHM & BLUES FESTIVAL AT METROTECH
MetroTech Commons, Flatbush Ave. at Myrtle Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—June 26: The legendary Senegalese Afro-Cuban ensemble **Orchestra Baobab** performs a noontime show.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—June 29: The charismatic singer, songwriter, bandleader, and actor **Lyle Lovett** is touring in support of his latest release, "It's Not Big It's Large."

BLENDER THEATRE AT GRAMERCY
127 E. 23rd St. (212-307-7171)—June 26-27: **Peter Murphy.** In the early eighties, the gloomy British foursome known as Bauhaus released several era-defining singles, such as "Bela Lugosi's Dead" and "Dark Entries." The band broke up in 1983, and its members went on to pursue various projects before reuniting, in the late nineties. A decade later, the band has acrimoniously split again, and has released a posthumous final record, "Go Away White." In the wake of that anticlimax, Murphy, the lead singer, has revived his solo career, which gave him a hit, "Cuts You Up," in 1990. These days, he augments his deep, Bowie-ish croon with musical elements from his adopted homeland, Turkey.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—June 26: **The Toadies.** More or less a one-hit wonder (thanks to a compellingly odd 1995 single, "Possum Kingdom"), the hard-hitting Texas band still commands a fervent cult following. Though the members officially called it quits in 2001, they're now back in the saddle. June 27: **Harry and the Potters.** Paul and Joe DeGeorge, a pair of grownup brothers from outside Boston, write songs from the perspective of pop culture's most successful boy wizard. The music is retro-sounding, a little folk, a lot rock opera (think of a more literary "Tommy").

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—June 26: The throwback string-band sounds of the **Carolina Chocolate Drops** and the legendary gospel quartet the **Dixie Hummingbirds.** June 27: Indie rock with the **Cold War Kids, Elvis Perkins in Dearland,** and **Sam Champion.** June 28: The hip-hop sounds of the nineties ring out again, in a reunion of **O.C., Jeru the Damaja, Chubb Rock, Masta Ace,** and other local rappers associated with the short-lived supergroup the Crooklyn Dodgers.

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—June 28: **Vieux Farka Touré,** the son of the Malian superstar Ali Farka Touré, follows in his father's footsteps, playing a fierce African blues guitar. With the Senegalese performer **Fallou Dieng** and the local ensemble **Zozo Afrobeat.** June 29: The Israeli roots-reggae singer **Mosh Ben Ari.** With **Rupa and the April Fishes,** a multilingual San Francisco band with a global approach.

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—July 1: A rare visit from the raucous English band **A3** (which goes by the name Alabama 3 at home). Best known for supplying the theme song for "The Sopranos," the raw and bluesy "Woke Up This Morning," the group, which throws a funky beat at everything from country to rock, has inspired legions of fans to ecstasy. The writer Irvine Welsh has said that A3 is "the first band I could ever dance to in the daytime hours without chemical assistance."

HIRO BALLROOM
The Maritime Hotel, 371 W. 16th St. (212-260-4700)—June 25: The singer-songwriter **Liz Phair** is the latest alternative-rock veteran to dust off the record that won her initial fame. "Exile in Guyville," from 1993, was purportedly a song-by-song response to the Rolling Stones' "Exile on Main Street," and its no-frills, lo-fi aesthetic and sharp pop hooks swiftly vaulted her into the hipster pantheon. Phair will be performing songs from the record in its libidinous entirety.

(LE) POISSON ROUGE
158 Bleecker St. (212-796-0741)—This new venue, situated in what was once the legendary Village Gate, promises to book shows irrespective of genre. In that spirit, it's already presented classical recitals and jazz shows (see the JVC Jazz Festival, below), and the upcoming schedule includes a wide range of arguably more popular music. June 25: **Baby Dee** is a Cleveland-based singer, harpist, pianist, accordionist, and songwriter. She mixes carnivalesque performance antics (back in the nineties, she sang Shirley Temple covers while riding around Greenwich Village on a custom tricycle outfitted with a concert harp) with moments of heart-wrenching, gospel-like intensity. Her wonderfully eccentric recent release "Safe Inside the Day," which was co-produced by Matt Sweeney and Will Oldham, consists mostly of lighthearted songs fleshed out by elegant woodwinds and strings. The lyrics cover a wide variety of subjects, including Catholic hagiography, stalwart albinos, and her father's crowbar collection. Most stirring are the songs Dee sings with just spare piano accompaniment; on these, her husky and warm voice achieves an unusual combination of affect and sincerity. July 1: **Jonathan Kane's February,** a quintet led by the downtown fixture Kane, on drums, and rounded out by three guitars and a bass. The group's drone-heavy and occasionally explosive sound reflects the bandleader's background with the noise pioneers Swans and the composers La Monte Young and Rhys Chatham. In 1981, following several years in a local blues band

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
MADE IN AFRICA

Orchestra Baobab was formed thirty-eight years ago, in Dakar, but time has done nothing to diminish the group's quiet intensity. The band mixes so many regional styles that listeners can easily think they're hearing three or four different genres.

The guitarist Barthelemy Attisso, who is also a lawyer, leads the band, and although Baobab's rhythms are distinctly Afro-Cuban, Attisso's clean electric-guitar lines pull the music back to West Africa. The musicians stick almost exclusively to loping, mid-tempo rhythms that interlock and, imperceptibly, intensify. The band recorded a combination of new and old material for last year's album "Made in Dakar," which proved that, like James Brown, it started its career with a template that needs no alterations. Baobab is effortlessly alive and globally indeterminate, a soothing and bewitching puzzle that always feels worth solving. The band plays free shows during the River to River Festival and the BAM Rhythm & Blues Festival at MetroTech this week.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

opening for such legends as Muddy Waters, Kane was asked to join the nascent band Swans by their founder, Michael Gira. Taking Howlin' Wolf as an unlikely musical role model, the group pushed Wolf's repetition, pared-down harmony, and sometimes slow tempos to unbelievable extremes. Kane's latest group, which combines elements of early Swans with Chatham's monumental guitar pieces, features long minimalist songs that build slowly over his precise and motoric drumming. A solo performance by the gifted new-music pianist **Kathleen Supové** opens the show.

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL

June 25: **Orchestra Baobab** (see BAM Rhythm & Blues Festival at MetroTech). (Rockefeller Park.) June 27: The up-and-coming power trio **A Place to Bury Strangers** adheres to the adage "If it's too loud, you're too old." With the psychedelic soul of **King Khan & the Shrines.** (South Street Seaport.) (For more information, visit www.rivertorivernyc.com.)

Helen Levitt's photograph "New York City, circa 1940," at Laurence Miller.

TERMINAL 5

610 W. 56th St. (212-582-6600)—June 26: **Citizen Cope.** Born Clarence Greenwood, this singer-songwriter favors complex narratives about everything from race and religion to life on the streets, layered over slow grooves and slightly funky beats. His opening act, **Alice Smith,** is a local singer with a four-octave range. She delivers ambitious and insightful R. & B. on her album, "For Lovers, Dreamers & Me." June 28: The Jägermeister Music Tour, much like the heady apéritif itself, is all about strength and bitterness. Few bands embody these qualities better than Connecticut's **Hatebreed** and Brooklyn's **Type O Negative.** The former plays brutal rock that's full of the stealthiest elements of hardcore and metal; the latter favors a slow, torturous approach.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—June 25-29: **Kurt Elling,** a postmodern jazz singer whose verbose excursions can veer from vocalese to Rilke and Neruda quotes.

BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—June 24-29: The **Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band,** which is stocked with veterans of the irreplaceable bop giant's ensembles, works hard to honor the musical pioneer. The chief horn soloists include the saxophonist **James Moody,** the trombonist **Slide Hampton,** and the trumpeter **Roy Hargrove.**

JAZZ STANDARD

116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—A longtime New York mainstay, **George Coleman** is a veteran tenor-saxophone player who combines bebop expertise with a gritty edge that bespeaks his deep Memphis roots. The saxophonist **Eric Alexander** joins his quartet June 26-29.

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—June 26: The legendary and rarely seen British vocalist **Norma Winstone** is joined by the reedman **Klaus Gesing** and the pianist **Glauco Venier** to perform selections from her acclaimed new ECM release, "Distances." June 30: The always ambitious singer and composer **Nora York** returns with "Furtiva Lagrima," a work in progress that blends operatic compositions with original work.

JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL

The annual gathering wraps up this week with a heavy pop and R. & B. roster, including **Soulive,** with the saxophonist **Joshua Redman** (at (Le) Poisson Rouge on June 26-27); **Al Green** and **Dianne Reeves** (at Carnegie Hall on June 27); and the **Mos Def Big Band,** with **Gil Scott-Heron** (at Carnegie Hall on June 28). Jazz and other genres are represented by the **Billy Harper Quintet** (at the Studio Museum in Harlem on June 26); **Dee Dee Bridgewater's** program "Red Earth: A Malian Journey" (at the New York Society for Ethical Culture on June 27); **Tim Berne** and **Craig Taborn** (at the Rubin Museum of Art, also on June 27); **Richard Galliano's Tangaria 4tet** (at Zankel Hall on June 28); and **Charles Lloyd's** new quartet featuring **Jason Moran** (at the New York Society for Ethical Culture, also on June 28). (For more information, visit www.festivalnetwork.com.)

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—June 24-29: The **Lou Donaldson** quartet. The inimitable also saxophonist Donaldson, who came of age in 1952 with Milt Jackson and Thelonious Monk and who delved into funk in the early seventies, delivers a high-style blend of authentic bop and good-time R. & B.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"J.M.W. Turner."** Opens July 1. ♦ **"Art of the Royal Court: Treasures of the Pietre Dure from the Palaces of Europe."** Opens July 1. ♦ **"Superheroes: Fashion and Fantasy."** Through Sept. 1. ♦ **"Medieval and Renaissance Treasures from the Victoria and Albert Museum."** Through Aug. 17. ♦ **"Framing a Century: Master Photographs, 1840-1940."** Through Sept. 1. ♦ **"Jeff Koons on the Roof."** Through Oct. 26. ♦ **"Tiepolo Drawings from the Robert Lehman Collection."** Through Aug. 17. ♦ **"Radiance from the Rain Forest: Featherwork in Ancient Peru."** Through Sept. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson."** Through June 30. ♦ **"Dali: Painting and Film."** Opens June 29. ♦ **"Bernd and Hilla Becher: Landscape/Topology"** is a compact survey of the influential German couple's photographs of industrial structures and factory-town landscapes in Europe and America. Bernd Becher's death, in 2007, brought an end to a project that spanned fifty years and elevated the deadpan document to the status of high-art icon. Although their black-and-white photographs of coal bunkers, gas tanks, blast furnaces, and other hulking relics of the industrial age make no attempt to seduce the viewer, when they're hung together in grids of up to thirty framed prints, as they are here, they have the undeniable elegance of objectivity at its coolest. Through Aug. 25. ♦ **"Glossolalia: Languages of Drawing."** Through July 7. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Louise Bourgeois."** Opens June 27. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Buckminster Fuller: Starting with the Universe."** Opens June 26. ♦ **"Polaroids: Mapplethorpe."** Through Sept. 7. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"© Murakami."** Through July 13. ♦ **"Ghada Amer: Love Has No End."** Through Oct. 19. ♦ **"Click! A Crowd-Curated Exhibition."** Opens June 27. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"The Horse."** Through Jan. 4, 2009. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

ASIA SOCIETY

Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Ardeshir Mohassess: Art and Satire in Iran."** Through Aug. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Heavy Light: Recent Photography and Video from Japan."** Although this show is less sexy—and less sociologically trenchant—than the survey of contemporary Japanese art curated by Takashi Murakami at the Japan Society three years ago, it does have some gems. These include surrealistic depictions of extreme ikebana by the elder statesman Yukio Nakagawa (a "fountain" made with crushed crimson tulip petals looks like a bloody Bundt cake) and Hiroh Kikai's black-and-white portraits of a dishwasher maintenance man, a tattoo artist, and a Butoh performer, among other characters. At the show's entrance, photographs by Tomoko Sawada, the wonderful young artist who works in the self-portrait tradition of Cindy Sherman, set high expectations, which the show never quite fulfills. Through Sept. 7. ♦ **"Bill Wood's Business."** Through Sept. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940-1976."** Through Sept. 21. ♦ **"Warhol's Jews: Ten Portraits Reconsidered."** Through Aug. 13. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Philip Guston: Works on Paper."** Through Aug. 31. ♦ **"Illuminating the Medieval Hunt."** Through Aug. 10. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM

235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—**"Paul Chan: The 7 ~~Lights~~."** Through June 29. ♦ **"Tomma**

[illegible] journey.
[illegible] from the ground up.
[illegible] difference.

If there's one thing we've learned, it's that comfort on the ground is as important as comfort in the air. So our First Lounges in both Sydney and Melbourne promise curbside valets, restaurants for pre-flight dining, libraries and spas for your well-being. We're pleased to also extend our First Lounge privileges to Qantas Platinum, oneworld Emerald, American Airlines Executive Platinum and Million Miler members too. What else *would you expect from an airline that's been flying longer, continuously, than any other. Over 87 years.*

qantas.com/experience

The world's most experienced airline.

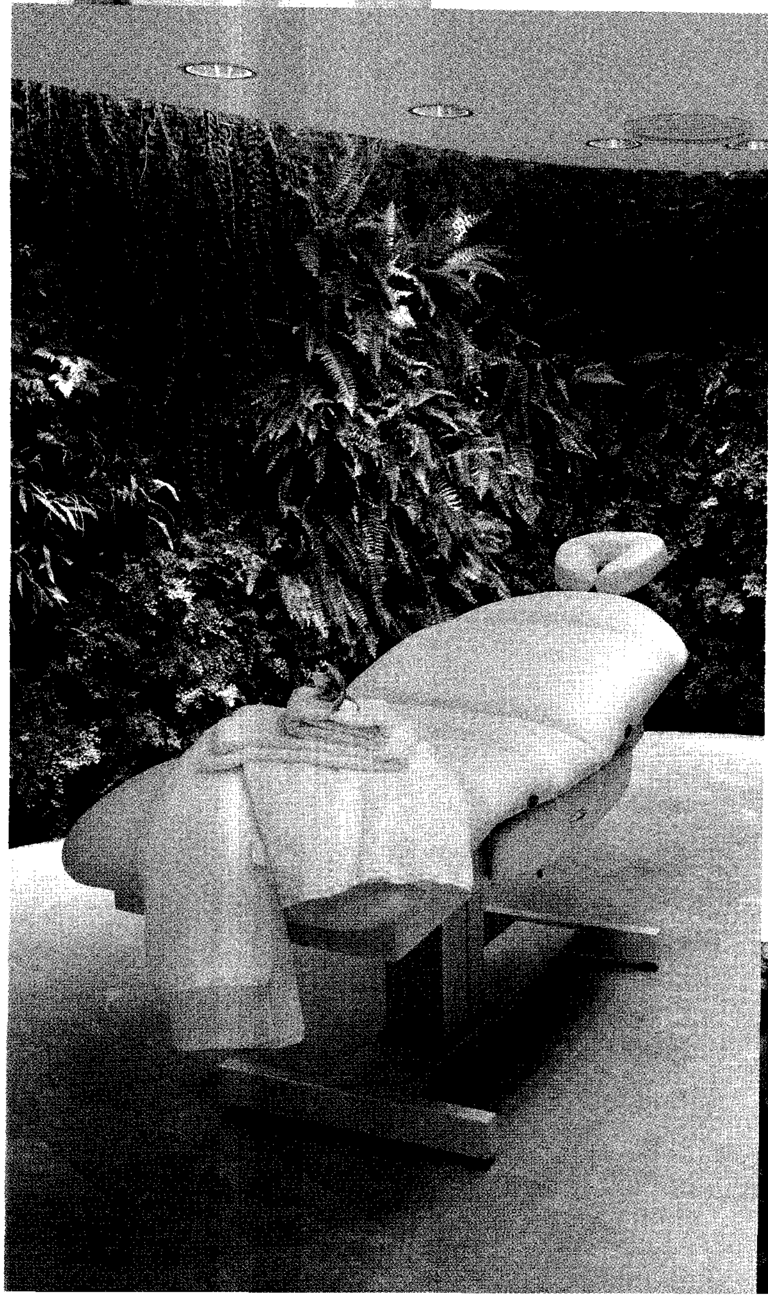
QANTAS

Qantas Creative Director, Marc Newson

FIRST CLASS LOUNGE? LAVISH OASIS? LUXURY RETREAT

All of the above.

Designed by renowned industrial designer and Qantas Creative Director, Marc Newson, our First Lounges are on par with the convenience and luxury found in the world's best five-star hotels. Not surprising when you consider Newson designed these exceptionally stylish retreats with some of his favorite materials including Italian marble, Swiss quartzite and American oak. Apart from impeccable design, exquisite food and a dedicated concierge service, you'll also enjoy complimentary treatments in the First Spa. From facials and mini-manicures, to reflex therapies and massages, we'll make sure the only baggage you'll have onboard are the bags you packed at home.



QANTAS A380.
NOT JUST A NEW ERA IN AVIATION.

A new era in First class travel.

The arrival of the Qantas A380 in fall 2008 heralds the reinvention of our First cabin. With suites available on all A380 flights to Melbourne and Sydney, these private sanctuaries are spacious enough to accommodate dining with a guest and offer everything you need at the touch of a button. Including a huge 17" LCD video entertainment screen. Your custom seat incorporates a multi-zone massage system and reclines fully to create our longest, widest bed yet. When night comes our sheepskin mattress overlays and luxurious bedding will feel almost as good as your bed at home. What else would you expect from an airline that's been flying longer, continuously than any other.

The world's most experienced airline. QANTAS

Abts." Through June 29. ♦ **"Double Album: Daniel Guzmán and Steven Shearer."** Through July 6. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"Plague in Gotham!: Cholera in Nineteenth-Century New York."** Through Nov. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN
Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Rd., the Bronx (718-817-8700)—**"Moore in America."** Through Nov. 2. ♦ **"Darwin's Garden: An Evolutionary Adventure."** Through July 20. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson."** Through June 30. ♦ **"Arctic Hysteria: New Art from Finland."** Through Sept. 15. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

SCULPTURECENTER
44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—**"Decoys, Complexes, and Triggers: Feminism and Land Art in the 1970s."** Through July 28. ♦ **"Michael Portnoy: Casino Ilinx."** Through July 28. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

JESS
The painter and collagist, born Burgess Collins in 1923, trained as a chemist and worked briefly on the Manhattan Project. A vivid nightmare about apocalyptic technology led him to give up science and move to San Francisco, where he became an artist and a fixture of the Bay Area scene until his death, in 2004. This concise survey of works from 1952 through 1993 presents oils—with surfaces so heavily worked that they seem sculpted from cake frosting—and the jam-packed collages for which Jess is best known. The latter, which the artist dubbed "paste-ups," are a gleeful blend of highbrow and kitsch. Through July 31. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-262-5050.)

Short List

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON / HELEN LEVITT: Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930. Through Aug. 14. **FRANCESCO CLEMENTE:** Gallery Met, Metropolitan Opera House. 212-870-7457. Through July 14. **TOMOKO SAWADA:** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 212-752-1223. Through June 27. **"DEEP COMEDY":** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Opens June 25.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

MATTHEW BRANNON
No figures or faces appear in Brannon's show of letterpress prints pairing stylized imagery and text, but the depictions of food, fizzy drinks, and stiletto-heeled shoes identify the voices: product-pampered urbanites, seething with Cheeveresque ennui. Cocktail-hour exasperation ("Now he's explaining Hitchcock. It's fine. I just nod and sip my vodka soda") gives way to morning-after recrimination ("We can pretend that it doesn't matter that you didn't make it home last night"). In the world according to Brannon, style is substance and satisfaction is just out of reach. A pair of white-noise machines installed in two corners, as if in therapists' waiting rooms, reinforce the neurotic tone. Through July 11. (Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467.)

ADAM CVIJANOVIC
Cvijanovic turns the main room into a walk-in film set inspired by D. W. Griffith's "Intolerance" (1916). Scenes from a famous crowd sequence—the Persian invasion of Babylon—are painted in purple monochrome (à la tinted black-and-white film) on large, freestanding stretchers, installed in a circle. Elsewhere, a panoramic oil-on-Mylar work depicts Griffith's set towering over the still rural Hollywood Hills. Cvijanovic's subject seems to be creative ambition as personified by a filmmaker who dreamed big, failed bigger (the movie ruined Griffith financially), and earned a place in film history. This overwrought—and overthought—homage is diverting, but it pales in comparison with its outsized subject. Through July 3. (Bellwether, 134 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-929-5959.)

WALTON FORD
In 1515, a rhinoceros was sent from Lisbon to Rome as a gift for Pope Leo X. The rhinoceros was lost in a shipwreck, and soon thereafter Albrecht Dürer portrayed the animal in a woodcut, based on hearsay alone. Ford conveys the tale with characteristic panache in a monumental triptych in watercolor, gouache, pencil, and ink. Other animals (some apocryphal) illustrated here are "Thurneysser's Demon" (a moose with red antlers allegedly presented by a Swiss naturalist to the frightened populace of Basel in 1580) and the legendary tiger of Hyrcania (an ancient kingdom near the Caspian Sea). Through July 3. (Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St. 212-563-4474.)

KAHN AND SELESNICK
With each new exhibition, this collaborative pair rewrite history to include an imaginary country, community, or cult that they document in meticulously staged, digitally composed color photographs populated mostly by their multiply cloned selves. No matter how fanciful they are (the current show concerns Eisbergfriestadt, a utopian principality situated on an iceberg stuck in a Baltic port), Kahn and Selesnick's images are so grounded in fascinating specificity and pictorial wit that it's hard not to lose yourself in their world. Convincing artifacts like an anaconda-skin boat and a trunk of bundled faux currency (a souvenir from earlier inflationary times) make it easy to suspend disbelief. Through July 3. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

AARON SISKIND
Siskind's photographs of corroded metal, torn posters, drizzled tar, and peeling paint don't imitate Abstract Expressionism—they share its restless sensibility. The thirty-five prime examples gathered here were first shown at New York's Egan Gallery between 1947 and 1954, and they capture the spirit of the era without looking old-fashioned in the least. Images of bold strokes may disguise an underlying anxiety, but there's also a genuine excitement and a sense of discovery. With this work, Siskind was speaking more and more confidently in a new language, one that put photography and painting on fertile common ground. Through June 28. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 24th St. 212-989-7600.)

"PAYDAY"
An obscure cult film from the seventies starring Rip Torn as a hell-raising country musician provides the title for this group show, which narrowly escapes being hermetically hip, thanks to the high calibre of its contents. Off-kilter pop-culture references abound, notably in a sculpture spiked with mirrors pasted with the face of Simon Le Bon, by Rachel Harrison, and a colorful painting on a rolled piece of Plexiglas with the words "Ben Gazzara" inscribed in one corner, by J. St. Bernard (a purported alias of the late art dealer Colin De Land). The show also includes works by Bernadette Corporation, Roe Ethridge, and Allen Ruppersberg, and a terrific, genre-bending video by Alex Hubbard. Through June 28. (Greene Naftali, 508 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770.)

JOHN RITTER

DVD NOTES
WAY-OUT WEST

The director Anthony Mann, an early master of the film noir, turned to the Western in mid-career, and his second, **"The Furies"** (Criterion), from 1950, is one of the greatest—in effect, a frontier noir with epic ambitions and Shakespearean audacities.

The story revolves around T. C. Jeffords (Walter Huston), a self-made rancher, proud and vain, who keeps his strong-willed yet dependent daughter, Vance (Barbara Stanwyck), close to him in a strange, and subliminally incestuous, bond. The complex plot joins sex, money, and power, as when T.C. tries to buy off the gambler (Wendell Corey) whose father T.C. had killed and for whom Vance has fallen, or when Vance battles T.C.'s aging, insidious consort (Judith Anderson), who is scheming for control of the homestead.

Mann, who was born in California, knew that the wide-open spaces of the West were anything but empty, and portrayed its multicultural heritage long before the concept became familiar. To get the mortgage that will save his ranch, T.C. has to clear his land of squatters—Hispanic families who have lived there for centuries, including that of Juan Herrera (Gilbert Roland), who is Vance's lifelong admirer and, remarkably, her dearest platonic friend. (Their tensions, sarcasms, and tender rituals contribute to what is perhaps the cinema's most touching depiction of male-female friendship.)

Mann brings these passions to the screen with energy and intelligence, staging the archetypal violence (much of it occurring between men and women, behind closed doors) in scenes of quiet, chilling immobility. Stanwyck's inward performance, one of her most brilliant—even the back of her head is somehow stunningly expressive—contrasts with Huston's gleefully over-the-top histrionics, which actors playing crazed patriarchs have strained to match ever since. Mann emphasizes the characters' ambiguous blend of outsized evil and noble virtue, eliciting grand, tragic overtones from Charles Schnee's adaptation of the orotund novel by Niven Busch (included in the box).

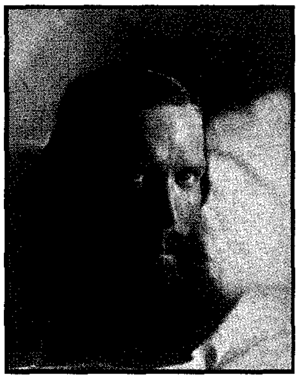
Mann quickly became a master of the Western; his "Winchester '73," also from 1950, remade James Stewart's career. (It's included with two other Mann-Stewart Westerns, "The Far Country" and "Bend of the River," in a six-disk boxed set from Universal, **"James Stewart: The Western Collection."**) Mann and Gary Cooper collaborated on the gaunt, bitter **"Man of the West"** (M-G-M), in 1958, also a new DVD release. Over the years, the director's command of landscape and action developed, but, for drama, "The Furies," which fully lives up to its title, remains unrivalled.

—Richard Brody

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
MASTER CLASS

You might want to argue with the Metropolitan Museum's choice of the thirteen "masters" who represent the high points of photography's first hundred years (1840 to 1940) in "Framing a Century," if only because the premise of this trim, instructive survey has all the excitement of an intro-level art-history course. But step into the galleries and look around: every picture is astonishing, and the curator Malcolm Daniel's choices are sure and sophisticated. Combining famous and little-known images, each carefully annotated grouping doesn't attempt to sum up a career; rather, it suggests the broader scope of the artist's range. The exhibition sets choice pieces from the Gilman Collection, acquired by the Met in 2005, alongside other works to emphasize the rarity, quality, and sheer beauty of the museum's holdings. What sounds like an exclusionary exercise ends up as a pleasure trip—from Roger Fenton's image of sunlight suffusing the mist above a rushing stream in 1854 to Brassaï's shot of street lights glowing through the Paris fog in 1932.

—*Vince Aletti*



JULIA MARGARET CAMERON, "PHILIP STANHOPE WORSLEY"/THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Short List

BURT BARR: Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262. Through July 25. **HARRY DODGE AND STANYA KAHN:** Dee, 545 W. 20th St. 212-924-7545. Through Aug. 2. **TETSUMI KUDO:** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000. Through Aug. 15. **JANE AND LOUISE WILSON:** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121. Through Aug. 2. **"IDLE YOUTH":** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300. Opens June 26. **"STANDARD SIZES":** Kreps, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-741-8849. Through July 12. **"WHO'S AFRAID OF JASPER JOHNS?":** Shafrazi, 544 W. 26th St. 212-274-9300. Through July 12.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

FRANCISCO DE GOYA
Goya made the suite of etchings known as "The Disasters of War" between 1810 and 1820, as a cry of outrage against the atrocities of the Napoleonic Wars. The eighty prints on view date from 1906, and they retain their capacity to shock, not least through the scalding irony of their captions: in "Charity," naked corpses are flung head first into a yawning mass grave. The images are crisp and velvety, balancing remorselessly clear-eyed reportage with a graphic mastery synthesizing history painting, political cartooning, caricatural genre scenes, and, seemingly, every depiction of Hell that war can conjure up. Through Aug. 1. (Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.)

Short List

DARA FRIEDMAN: Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258. Through June 28. **OS GEMEOS:** Deitch, 18 Wooster St. 212-343-7300. Opens June 28. **LALEH KHORRAMIAN:** Salon 94 Freemans, 1 Freeman Alley. 646-672-9212. Through July 12.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The company presents its final Robbins program, including the Olympian "Goldberg Variations," paired with Robbins's gamelike collaboration with Twyla Tharp, "Brahms/Handel." On June 27, the dancers take over the theatre for the first annual Dancers' Choice program, an initiative to benefit the Dancers' Emergency Fund. The program was conceived by the young principal Jonathan Stafford, who commissioned a ballet ("Flit of Fury—The Monarch") for the occasion from Adam Hendrickson (a soloist), set to an original score by the corps member Aaron Severini. ♦ June 24 at 7:30 and June 26 at 8: "Thou Swell," "Prodigal Son," and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." ♦ June 25 at 7:30, June 28 at 8, and June 29 at 3: "The Goldberg Variations" and "Brahms/Handel." ♦ June 27 at 8: "Flit of Fury—The Monarch" and repertory excerpts. ♦ June 28 at 2: "Mozartiana," "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée,'" and "La Sonnambula." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
"La Bayadère," staged for the company by the great Natalia Makarova in 1980, is a tragic love story set in ancient India: Nikiya, a temple dancer, loves Solor, a warrior, who is betrothed to Gamzatti, the daughter of the Rajah. Along with temple dances, triumphal marches, a dancing golden idol, and an earthquake, the ballet features the famous "Kingdom of the Shades" scene, an opium dream in which dozens of gauzily dressed ballerinas descend elegiacally, creating a heavenly illusion of infinity. ♦ June 24 and June 26-27 at 8 and June 25 and June 28 at 2 and 8: "La Bayadère." ♦ June 30-July 1 at 8: "The Merry Widow." (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000. Through July 12.)

"THE FRENCH COLLECTION"
Thierry Malandain's Ballet Biarritz concludes its run. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 24-25 at 7:30, June 26-27 at 8, and June 28 at 2 and 8.)

NICHOLAS LEICHTER DANCE
Leichter's new "Spanish Wells" takes its title from an island in the Bahamas, and, as in all his work, the movement style is part classroom, part club. This time around, the mixing is even more explicitly reflected in the music: the shimmering textures in Debussy's "La Mer" inspire a tempest-tossed semi-narrative with suggestions of spirit possession, while the retro-soul grooves of Amy Winehouse summon some wonderfully juicy gesticulation. Leichter's recent "Rite of Spring" shares the program. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. June 25-27 at 7:30, June 28 at 2 and 7:30, and June 29 at 2.)

TOM PEARSON AND ZACH MORRIS
"Vanishing Point" uses the white columns of St. Mark's Church to stage a funeral, and the participation of the bluegrass band the Dang-It Bobbys and plentiful whiskey help to suggest the South. Musings on mortality and heritage, inappropriate revelations, repeated runs smack into the altar wall, and dance segments that are touching and deep in some parts and very thin in others add up to a vague sense of Faulknerian doom, set to good music. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. June 25-27 at 8:30.)

FOOFWA D'IMOBILITÉ
The Swiss dancer Frédéric Gafner has a fanciful stage name, strong Cunningham technique (he danced with the company for seven years), and a Cunninghamesque penchant for continual experimentation. In the solo "Benjamin de Bouillis," Gafner uses the technique, and a mirror, to simulate an out-of-body experience. (Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St. 212-279-4200. June 26-28 at 7:30.)

MOLLY RABINOWITZ / LIQUIDGRIP
Rabinowitz's choreography combines physical flexibility, complex partnering, a whimsical sensibility, and, often, an ambivalent attitude toward ballet. The repertory program includes "As Good as She Was Beautiful," in which five women in red tutus become obsessive-compulsive, and "Comfort," in which a woman in a white tutu lugs around an armchair. (Dance New Amsterdam, 280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-279-4200. June 27-28 at 8.)

PILOBOLUS
Acrobatics and visual illusion set to New Age electronica is the company's stock-in-trade, but there's no denying the stunning nature of the feats these dancers pull off. During its annual residency at the Joyce, the company presents three repertory programs plus three new pieces: "Lanterna Magica," an exploration of nature and mythology, by Michael Tracy; "Razor: Mirror," a meditation on safety and its antithesis; and "Darkness and Light," a collaboration with the imaginative puppeteer Basil Twist. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 30-July 1 at 7:30. Through July 26.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW
June 25-29, at the Ted Shawn Theatre: The French-Algerian choreographer Heddy Maalem reinterprets Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring," in a propulsive work integrating the contrasting movement styles of fourteen dancers from around the African continent, and sets it in a white cube on which images of daily life in Lagos are projected. ♦ From June 26 to July 6, the Doris Duke Theatre goes in the round, as the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company presents "Chapel/Chapter." Three narratives—the murder of a family of four, a man who kills his daughter, and an ambiguous event involving two boys at summer camp—are recited, acted out, sung, and thoroughly distilled. The live participation of the cellist Christopher Antonio William Lancaster and the vocalist Lawrence (Lipbone) Redding, both of whom collaborated on the score, add immeasurably to the impact. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. For a complete schedule, visit www.jacobspillow.org. Through Aug. 24.)

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP
The music man returns to Tanglewood with a première for six dancers set to Samuel Barber's "Excursions," one of the composer's ventures into Americana, a suite of piano bagatelles complete with hoedown and blues elements. Also on the program

is "Bedtime," Morris's 1992 telling of three Schubert songs, and his companion pieces to Brahms songs: "New Love Song Waltzes" (1982), aching and vulnerable, with partner swapping, and "Love Song Waltzes" (1989), friendly and communal. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200. June 26-27 at 8.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
CONCERTS IN TOWN

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC: "SUMMERTIME CLASSICS"
The avuncular British conductor Bramwell Tovey, who has found a comfortable niche at the Philharmonic, brings his light but knowing touch (and his Pythonesque shtick) once again to the orchestra's early-summer series, held in the air-conditioned confines of Avery Fisher Hall. The programs are friendly; the first, offered with the young pianist Joyce Yang, features Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2, along with Shostakovich's "Festive Overture" and excerpts from Prokofiev's ballet "Romeo and Juliet." (June 25-26 at 7:30.) ♦ Another substantial all-Russian program keeps the Shostakovich and Prokofiev pieces but leaves out the Rachmaninoff in favor of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto (with James Ehnes, a series favorite). (June 27 at 8.) ♦ "Light classical" selections fill out the next pair of concerts, including works by Rossini (the Overture to "The Italian Girl in Algiers"), Falla, Rimsky-Korsakov ("Capriccio Espagnole"), and Mascagni, along with two pieces with Ehnes as the soloist, Saraste's "Zigeunerweisen" and Saint-Saëns's "Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso." (July 1-2 at 7:30.) (212-875-5656. Through July 4.)

BARGEMUSIC
June 26 at 8: Jazz begins the week at the floating chamber-music venue, with a set offered by the pianist Ted Kooshian's Standard Orbit Quartet. ♦ June 27 at 8: "Here and Now," a continuing series of contemporary-music concerts, features the Neolit Ensemble (of flute, cello, and piano) in a program celebrating such contemporary American women composers as Alexandra du Bois, Hilary Tann, Belinda Reynolds, Chen Yi ("Night Thoughts"), and their great predecessor Ruth Crawford Seeger ("Diaphonic Suite"). ♦ June 28 at 8 and June 29 at 4: Tradition returns with the violinist Mark Peskanov, the pianist Navah Perlman, and the cellist Inbal Segev, offering works by Mozart, Brahms (the Sonata in E Minor for Cello and Piano), and Shostakovich (the Piano Trio No. 2). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

"WORDLESS AT WHITNEY LIVE"
Ronen Givony's Wordless Music series, which fearlessly mixes contemporary classical and indie music, is ascending a rapid learning curve. The Whitney Museum of American Art has been taking the series under its wing this month, providing an atmosphere for disciplined programming; in the last of four concerts, members of the American Contemporary Music Ensemble perform the String Quartet No. 2 by the prodigious young classicist Jefferson Friedman, sharing the program with the lo-fi punk-rock trio Times New Viking. (Madison Ave. at 75th St. June 27 at 7. Free with museum admission.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
This series, a tribute to the eccentric but insightful late conductor Jens Nygaard, sometimes includes marquee talent amid its often obscure repertory. Karen Gomyo, a prominent young Canadian violinist, teams up with some of the best local freelancers (including the violist Max Mandel and the clarinettist Vadim Lando) for a concert offering beloved chamber works by Mozart and Beethoven (the String Trio in G Major, Op. 9, No. 1) along with rarities by Peter von Winter and Wilhelm Stenhammar (the String Quartet No. 3 in F Major). (Church for All Nations, 417 W. 57th St. 212-799-1259. June 30 at 7:30.)

OUT OF TOWN

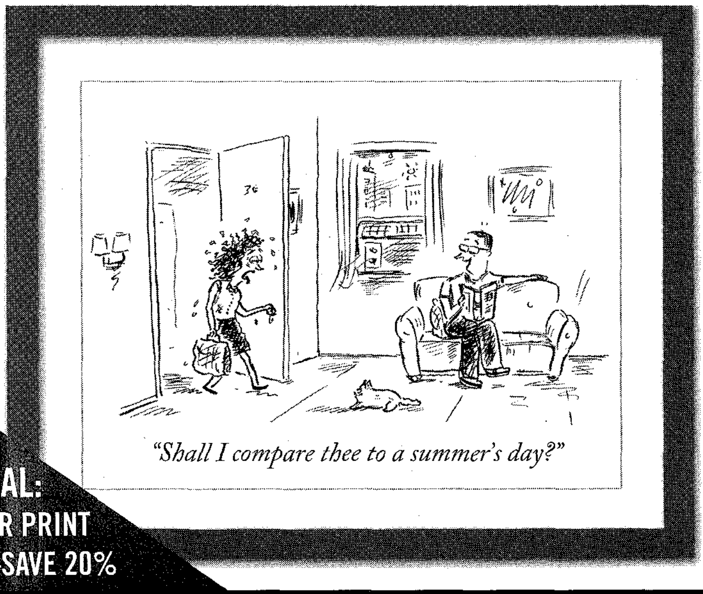
CARAMOOR FESTIVAL
June 26 at 7:30: The acclaimed Hugo Wolf Quartet, from Vienna, celebrates its tenth anniversary

American Ballet Theatre
2008 Spring Season • Now through July 12 • Kevin McKenzie, Artistic Director
La Bayadère
This Week Only!

Photo by Marty Sohl.

Amid the grand temples of mystical India, this glorious epic of eternal love and godly revenge features the spectacularly sublime "Kingdom of the Shades."
June 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 & 28 at 8pm; June 25 & 28 at 2pm
Metropolitan Opera House Box Office | 212.362.6000 | www.abt.org
Broadway at 64th St.; Sun Noon - 6 pm, Mon - Sat 10 am - 8 pm

Advertisement
Cartoon Prints



"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"
David Sipress, 2006

SPECIAL:
SUMMER PRINT
SALE—SAVE 20%
NEWYORKERSTORE.COM
To order, call 877-408-4269, or shop online for free shipping.

this year. They come to Caramoor to offer three Austrian classics—quartets by Haydn (the "Bird"), Webern, and Schubert (the grand Quartet No. 15 in G Major). ♦ June 27 at 8: Joyce Yang, a major new presence at the keyboard, offers a solo recital boldly mixing recent works (by Lowell Liebermann and Carl Vine) and old favorites (Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, Brahms's Piano Pieces, Op. 119, and Schumann's "Carnaval"). ♦ June 28 at 8: The pianist Peter Serkin is the honored guest of the Orchestra of St. Luke's in a program featuring symphonies by J. C. Bach and Mozart (No. 40 in G Minor) and keyboard concertos by Mozart and J. S. Bach (No. 1 in D Minor); Andreas Delfs, in his Caramoor début, conducts. ♦ June 29 at 4:30: In another concert with the orchestra, the mezzo-soprano Vivica Genaux and the pianist Max Barros join the conductor Michael Barrett to offer a tempting slate of Spanish and Latin-American works by Revueltas, Falla ("El Amor Brujo"), and Mozart Camargo Guarnieri (the Concertino for Piano and Chamber Orchestra). (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

TANGLEWOOD FESTIVAL
The summer season at Boston's musical duchy always begins a week before the official opening night (which this year stretches Berlioz's mammoth opera "Les Troyens" across the July 5-6 weekend). June 26-27 at 8: An ensemble of fine young singers and pianists from the Tanglewood Music Center are at the disposal of the Mark Morris Dance Group, accompanying the dancers in works based on Barber's "Excursions" (a world première), a clutch of Schubert songs ("Bedtime"), and Brahms's two sets of "Liebesliederwalzer." ♦ June 29 at 2:30: The distinguished pianist Menahem Pressler joins the impeccable Boston Symphony Chamber Players in a concert of works by Harbison, Mozart (the Quintet for Piano and Winds), and Dvořák (the Piano Quintet). ♦ June 30 at 8: Stefan Asbury and James Levine lead the TMC Orchestra in works by Messiaen and Dvořák (the Symphony No. 8 in G Major), respectively. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

ASTON MAGNA
Mendelssohn's music, fulsomely Romantic in expression but leanly Classical in its means, can respond well to the period-performance treatment. The long-respected ensemble begins its season at Bard College with a concert devoted to works that he wrote as a young man (including the String Quintet No. 1 in A Major and the Octet). (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7425. June 27 at 8. For information about the group's concerts in Williamstown and Great Barrington, Mass., see www.astonmagna.org.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
The Hugo Wolf Quartet, a brilliant young group from Vienna, is named for the great song composer, who struck string-quartet gold only once, with his delectable and diminutive "Italian Serenade." Schubert, another Austrian song composer, did a lot better: his towering Quartet No. 15 in G Major crowns a program devoted completely to his music which also includes the winsome Quartet No. 10 in E-Flat Major and the obscure Adagio and Rondo Concertante for Piano Quartet (with Andreas Klein). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. June 28 at 6:30.)

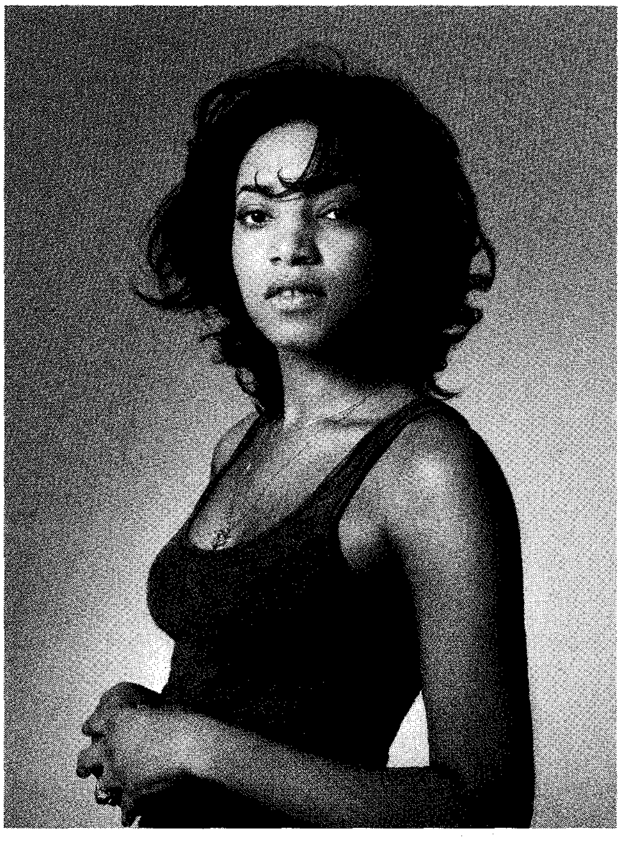
MAVERICK CONCERTS
This summer series' tranquil music chapel (with world-class acoustics) in the forest around Woodstock hosts a stream of vibrant performances. The season begins with a concert offered by the ardent and superbly disciplined Shanghai Quartet, performing string quartets by Schubert (the fervent "Quartettsatz"), Grieg, Chen Yi ("From the Path of Beauty"), and Ravel. (Woodstock, N.Y. June 29 at 4. For more information, call 845-679-8217.)

MOVIES OPENING

ALL IN THIS TEA
A documentary, directed by Les Blank and Gina Leibrecht, about a tea connoisseur's travels through China. Opens June 27. (Cinema Village.)

ELSA AND FRED
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 27. (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

FINDING MIRANDA
Peter Tolan directed this drama, about a compulsive gambler (Matthew Broderick) who goes to Las Vegas to find his niece (Brittany Snow), who is a prostitute. Opening June 27. (Sunshine Cinema.)



The soulful vocalist Alice Smith pays a visit to Terminal 5.

MICHELE ASSELIN

FULL GROWN MEN
A comedy about two middle-aged men who return to their favorite childhood theme park. Directed by David Munro. Opening June 25. (Cinema Village.)

GUNNIN' FOR THAT #1 SLOT
A documentary by Adam Yauch, of the Beastie Boys, about high-school basketball players who compete in a tournament at Rucker Park, in Harlem. Opening June 27. (In limited release.)

THE LAST MISTRESS
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 27. (IFC Center.)

LOUISE BOURGEOIS: THE SPIDER, THE MISTRESS AND THE TANGERINE
Marion Cajori and Amei Wallach directed this documentary about the artist. Opening June 25. (Film Forum.)

TRUMBO
A documentary about the screenwriter Dalton Trumbo, directed by Peter Askin. Opening June 27. (In limited release.)

WALL-E
A blend of animation and live action is used in this futuristic family fantasy, about a robot who attempts to fulfill his destiny. Directed by Andrew Stanton. Opening June 27. (In wide release.)

WANTED
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 27. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

BONJOUR TRISTESSE
Otto Preminger's caustic 1958 melodrama, adapted from Françoise Sagan's novel, stars Jean Seberg as Cécile, a frivolous, sybaritic French girl of seventeen who lives with her wealthy and philandering widower father (David Niven) in an all but incestuous complicity. While summering with him on the Riviera, Cécile finds her excessive freedom threatened by his sudden plan to marry her late mother's best friend (Deborah Kerr), a stern, orderly fashion designer, and does her best to break up the couple, with disastrous results. The spare, cynical story gives rise to some of Preminger's most ingenious stylistic flourishes, starting with the flashback structure. Cécile narrates from the standpoint of winter in Paris, a present tense that unfolds in glossy black-and-white images pierced by her self-accusing stares into the camera. The past is depicted in sumptuous color, which renders the pleasures of sun, sea, and sky heavy with doom. The best is saved for last: at a climactic moment, offscreen voices conjure a staggering coup de théâtre that brings the dénouement to life in a series of indelible images. A brilliant dialectical filmmaker, Preminger extracts the last ounce of pathos from the anguish of the mute witness.—*Richard Brody* (MOMA; June 25-26.)

BRICK LANE
A lovely movie. If only it were a little more exciting. Nazneen (Tannishtha Chatterjee), a beautiful Bangladeshi girl who, in the nineteen-eighties, gets sent to London to marry an established businessman, settles in Brick Lane, a traditional immigrant enclave. Her good-humored but pompous husband, Chanu (Satish Kaushik), is a classic post-colonial subject—he thinks that the British will accept him if he has read Brontë and Thackeray. Nazneen suffers under the weight of his illusions and his failure, never making her own wishes known, and then meets a handsome young man, Karim (Christopher Simpson), who grew up in London and has no illusions about anything. The first-time director Sarah Gavron, working with the cinematographer Robbie Ryan, has an appreciation of temperament and a tactile feeling for flesh that suggests extraordinary talent, but the movie is a shade cautious—it doesn't take off emotionally. Yet the tensions of an embattled immigrant community are fully realized. Gavron is a filmmaker to watch.—*David Denby* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

A DAY IN THE COUNTRY
Jean Renoir's forty-minute film, from 1936, based on a Maupassant story, is one of the two or three greatest short-story films ever made—a lyric tragedy that ranks with his finest work. Visually, it recaptures the Impressionist period; in tone, it accomplishes a transformation from light nostalgic comedy to despair. In the late eighteen-hundreds, a merchant (Gabriello) takes his family for an outing on the banks of the Marne; there, his wife (Jeanne Marken) and his innocent young daughter (Sylvia Bataille) are seduced—the one delightedly, the other tremblingly, like a captured bird. Renoir himself plays the role of an innkeeper. Cinematography by Claude Renoir and Jean Bourgoin; music by Kosma. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (MOMA; June 25-26.)

ELSA AND FRED
In Marcos Carnevale's sappy charmer, China Zorrilla shines as Elsa, a sprightly septuagenarian who perks up when Fred (Manuel Alexandre), a widower, moves in across the way, with his greedy, rude daughter in tow. Carnevale shamelessly attempts to pull at the audience's heartstrings while

Elsa, a brash old broad with a propensity for lying, persuades the stubborn, sad Fred to open up and have some fun. Zorrilla runs away with the film; given her generous sense of humor, it's hard to fault the filmmakers for being a bit too cute. In Spanish.—*Shauna Lyon* (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

ENCOUNTERS AT THE END OF THE WORLD
Werner Herzog's first-person documentary about his visit to Antarctica is not only a jaundiced spin on nature travelogues but an oddly revealing distillation of his career-long nexus of obsessions. Arriving at the McMurdo base, he discovers such banal appurtenances as a bowling alley and A.T.M.s, and what he calls "abominations such as an aerobics studio and yoga classes," and is seized with revulsion and a craving to get into the wilderness and experience the strangeness. His genre is the head trip, his worship of nature quasi-pagan, his chosen kin the adventurer élite, and his prejudice the dismissive lack of interest in everyone else. He is impressed by everything that is awe-inspiring, intimidating, overpowering, or incomprehensibly bizarre, and his crabby, self-righteous misanthropy, which comes through in every frame, rises to apocalyptic dimensions: learning of the perils to polar ice caps posed by global warming, he foresees with barely repressed glee the extinction of humanity through climate change. Only the comedy latent in his own sour ironies distinguishes this film—and indeed many of the films in his career—from the grimly romantic antihumanism of Weimar-era mountain-climbing dramas.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

THE HAPPENING
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

HIGH AND LOW
Akira Kurosawa's 1963 policier, based on Ed McBain's "King's Ransom," transcends its genre and premise and becomes an Olympian urban action movie. A principled shoe executive (Toshiro Mifune) is about to use his borrowings and savings to take over the business when he's told that his son has been kidnapped. The victim turns out to be his chauffeur's son, not his, but Mifune pays the ransom anyway, knowing that competing executives will force him out of the company. From the opening arguments over shoes—Mifune wants to make them sturdy, his peers want to make them cheap—Kurosawa imbues this picture with a fiery disdain for moral shoddiness. The first section is largely confined to Mifune's hilltop house, but Kurosawa charges every corner of it with tension, as Mifune's associates and the police crowd in on him and the kidnappers use binoculars to spy on his actions. In the second section, the director slashes through the claustrophobia with great horizontal strokes as the police inspector (the dynamic young Tatsuya Nakadai) helps Mifune deliver the ransom on a train and then commands his task force on a headlong manhunt. In the third and most impressionistic section, the kidnapper leads the cops on a harrowing tour of dope-riddled after-hours Japan. This is one street Eastern that takes the audience, as the original title promised, through "Heaven and Hell." In Japanese.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; June 29-30.)

THE INCREDIBLE HULK
The director, Louis Leterrier, doesn't try for poetry the way Ang Lee, the director of "Hulk," did in 2003, but Leterrier is marginally better than Lee at the summer-action-spectacle side of the Hulk story. Edward Norton, replacing Eric Bana, is Bruce Banner, who, when provoked, grows into fifteen feet or so of lime-green power with the temperament of a nasty five-year-old boy—he likes to throw things. But the truth is that, in any version, the Hulk is a dull beast. He's just a big angry guy; he has no soul, no oddities, no vulnerable or tender spots. If Bruce, in his normal state, were ambivalent about the powers that lie within him—drawn to the excitement of overwhelming strength but also repelled by it—the tension for the audience might be overwhelming, because this would speak to the way that we, too, are both tempted and repelled by anger. But the movie presents Bruce conventionally, as a man who has a strange, hateful disease that he can't get rid of, and the digital destruction derby that follows Bruce's enlargement is large-scale but familiar. It's a tired movie for a jaded audience. With Liv Tyler and William Hurt.—*D.D.* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/23/08.) (In wide release.)

INDIANA JONES AND THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL
It isn't bad—there are a few dazzling sequences, and a couple of good performances—but the unprecedented blend of comedy and action that made the earlier Indiana Jones movies so much more fun than any other adventure series is mostly gone. Stretches of this picture are flat, fussy, and dull. (How many times can we enter those papier-mâché tombs?) Trying to regain the old rapture, you have to grasp at the few scenes that work—mainly in the beginning, when Steven Spielberg, setting the picture in 1957, captures the era's mixture of blandness, latent revolt, and apocalypse, showing the jukebox-and-pompadour youth culture alongside nuclear fears. The plot is incomprehensible gibberish about a crystal skull, the lost Amazonian city of Akator, and a brain-fried archeologist named Ox (John Hurt, who is anything but an ox). But there's a dandy, immensely complicated chase sequence in the jungle which links together physical improbabilities and the rhythm and speed of Buster Keaton (though on a much grander scale). Cate Blanchett is terrific as a slit-eyed, overprecise K.G.B. agent, but Harrison Ford, doing Indy again at sixty-five, doesn't appear happy. He's tense and glaring, and he speaks his lines with more emphasis than is necessary, like a drunk trying to prove he's sober.—*D.D.* (6/2/08) (In wide release.)

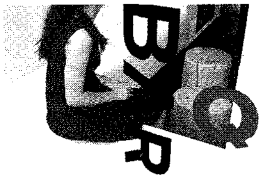
KIT KITTREDGE: AN AMERICAN GIRL
As if on cue, a drama for kids about unemployment and foreclosure—though one set during the Depression, based on the popular series of books and dolls. Abigail Breslin stars as a spunky ten-year-old cub journalist living in middle-class comfort in Cincinnati until her father (Chris O'Donnell) loses his job and goes to Chicago and her mother (Julia Ormond) takes in boarders to save their home. When the Kittredge house is burglarized in a crime wave that the newspapers are blaming on vagrants, the plot becomes a mild mystery that Kit tries to solve for the sake of her young hobo friend Will (Max Thieriot). The story is utterly sanitized (racism is wished away, ethnic issues ignored, politics reduced to Roosevelt vs. Scrooge) yet moderately engaging, and the period design is appealingly crisp, but, sadly, Breslin can't carry the movie. She's merely cute, her moxie forced; her performance makes one long for the young Lindsay Lohan's smartly focussed energy. The real star is the troubled economy and the mood of menace that the director, Patricia Rozema, conjures from it.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

KUNG FU PANDA
The folks at DreamWorks get it right this time, with a vibrant, lively computer-generated adventure. Jack Black lends his voice to the lead character, Po, a panda bear with an outsized personality, who needs a great deal of training to fulfill his destiny as the savior of China's Valley of Peace. He's joined by a group of legendary fighters (Angelina Jolie, Seth Rogen, and Jackie Chan, among many others, provide voice work) to defeat an evil snow leopard (the great Ian McShane) who's out to destroy the valley. The animation is dazzling; it's lovingly detailed without being overdone (particularly the opening sequence, which is hand-drawn and looks like prints struck from ancient woodblocks). The film has sweetness and wit; unlike some of DreamWorks' other animated movies, it's not overly reliant on pop-culture gags. Directed by John Stevenson and Mark Osborne.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

THE LAST MISTRESS
With the director Catherine Breillat, you know you'll get sex and pain; this period adaptation of an 1851 novel by Barbey d'Aurevilly delivers them with such style and conviction that her familiar

---

TABLES FOR TWO
BAR Q



HONORE BROWN

308-310 Bleecker St. (212-206-7817)—The middle "B" missing from Bar Q's name is a warning: you're not in hill country anymore. There's no tang of char in the air, no smoke pit seething in a back alley, no long-legged waitresses in denim cutoffs and cowboy boots. Those who come seeking barbecue—the eatery's ostensible raison d'être—should know that, first and foremost, this is an Anita Lo restaurant, which means elegance, intelligence, and wit. Lo, who presides over the kitchen at the consistently great Annisa, earlier lent her expertise to fast food (Rickshaw Dumpling Bar), and here she seems to be striving for a middle ground. While the décor echoes Annisa's (white walls, blond wood, swaddling leather booths), the decibel level is decidedly higher, the lighting bright and unmoody. The staff, despite their black uniforms, are almost disconcertingly enthusiastic ("I like your watch!"). One night, you might be served by a former contortionist, the next by a graduate student in clinical psychology.

When it comes to food, however, balancing the innovative and the crowd-pleasing is tricky. Early reports were not encouraging: diners, perhaps expecting sticky kalbi and rolls of paper towels, expressed dismay at the portion sizes, the prices, and the general culinary weirdness. But, to a Lo fan, the most exciting dishes here are precisely those which play havoc with tradition. Tuna ribs—a part of the fish commonly discarded—turn out to be talonlike bones with a thin, dissolvingly tender layer of meat, given subtle snap by yuzu and green chile. Unagi-and-scallion fritters simultaneously evoke the comfort of hush puppies and the delicacy of sushi. Best of all is the grass-fed Australian lamb, lean yet juicy, paired with wedges of cornstarch-thickened, garlic-infused fried milk that riff on creamy tofu, crisp on the outside and oozy on the inside. More conventional offerings are less successful, such as the pork "wings," served with a ketchupy Asian sauce, and the tea-smoked duck, pulpy and uncomfortably reminiscent of a heart. And, while the short ribs are ably executed—the meat does indeed fall off the bone—the unusual accoutrements (a smear of spicy red-black sauce, a scattering of goji berries, a dollop of chestnut purée) fail to elevate them above the ordinary.

At intervals, Lo emerges from the kitchen, head wrapped in a pink bandanna, to take the temperature of the room. The refinement of the cuisine doesn't prevent a sense of free-for-all—couples dabble wantonly in each other's entrées, groups squabble over prospective Vice-Presidential candidates while knocking back shiso juleps. It appears that the experiment is working: nobody seems troubled by a contradiction between dress-up and finger-licking good. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for dinner. Entrées $18-$29.)

—*Ligaya Mishan*

themes become new again. A young Parisian nobleman, Ryno de Marigny (Fu'ad Aït Aattou), is about to marry the virginal Hermangarde de Polastron (Roxane Mesquida) despite his notorious ten-year affair with a cigar-smoking Spanish spitfire, Vellini (Asia Argento), a drawing-room Carmen who pursues her prey with ruthless audacity. In the kind of performance that is routinely called daring, Argento lets loose earsplitting screams and throws her naked body around with abandon, but she does the substantive work quietly, with smoldering stares and chilling whispers of mad intent. Breillat gives the entire cast of characters delicately declamatory manners that fit the refined depravity of their milieu, and she frames them in subtly sculptural images to match. From a knife blade to a broken glass, from a bullet to a gynecological ordeal, bloodshed saturates the taut dramatic fabric and suggests the destructive power of an obsession that owes little to pleasure. With Michael Lonsdale and Yolande Moreau as a chorus of elders who get caught up in the tumult. In French.—*R.B.* (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

MY WINNIPEG

Guy Maddin's conjoined fantasy-memoir of his home town, structured as a meditation on why he can't bring himself to leave it, starts on a cinematic high from which it has trouble recovering: raw footage of a series of takes of the elderly actress Ann Savage (star of the classic film noir "Detour," from 1945), in which the relationship between director and actress converges with that of son and mother. Maddin has the comic inspiration to sublet his family home and bring in actors (including Savage) to reënact scenes of his childhood there, and these scenes have such intense psychodramatic power that Maddin deflects and apostrophizes them through the elaborate gamesmanship that characterizes most of the film. Musings on mystical and mythopoetic energy, odd and lurid byways of the city's history, and rueful odes to bygone sites and pleasures, all accomplished with a hysterical profusion of fantastic and confected images that fuse borrowings from silent camp classics and the experimental cinema, emerge insubstantial and overcooked. Nonetheless, Maddin's idea is so good, and his intentions so clearly realized, that the film proves endearing and its aftereffect haunting.—*R.B.* (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

SEX AND THE CITY

Apart from the fact that it tells you nothing about sex and very little about the city in which it takes place, this adaptation of the successful TV series is titled with accuracy and pith. You could fit almost five episodes of the show into the movie, and the writer-director, Michael Patrick King, has a tough time filling the space. Minor events—the possibility, say, that a character might have to spend New Year's Eve alone—are pumped up into arias of pity and consolation. We are still stuck with the travails of four New York friends: Miranda (Cynthia Nixon), Charlotte (Kristin Davis), Samantha (Kim Cattrall), and Carrie (Sarah Jessica Parker), the sharpest and yet somehow the most self-deluded of them all. Her on-off wedding to Mr. Big (Chris Noth) forms a sizable chunk of the plot, and interior designers everywhere will be thrilled to learn that the warmth of her emotions stands in direct proportion to the size of her walk-in closet. The film was always going to be predictable (that is part of its appeal), yet it feels too panicky to be stylish, and surprisingly tasteless: who could have foreseen that its humor would rely on a gastric gross-out? One small misstep of a movie; one giant leap backward for womankind.—*Anthony Lane* (6/9 & 16/08) (In wide release.)

TAKE OUT

A remarkable film, purportedly made for three thousand dollars, by Sean Baker and Shih-Ching Tsou. Ming (Charles Jang), an illegal immigrant from China, tries to make enough money in one day working as a delivery boy to pay off the thugs who smuggled him to the States. Revolving around a hole-in-the-wall Chinese restaurant on the Upper West Side—where the front of the house is in the loving care of Big Sister (the utterly winning Wang-Thye Lee)—Baker and Tsou's simple narrative feels like a richly authentic documentary. The terrific cast is led by Jang (amazingly, a Long Island native), who plays Ming as a determined, reticent man who seethes deeply within his shell.—*S.L.* (Quad Cinema.)

YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN

Should it ever get to the Middle East, it will roil the falafel tables on both sides of the Arab-Israeli divide. This obscene, ridiculous, and occasionally very funny movie, written by Judd Apatow, Adam Sandler, and Robert Smigel and directed by Dennis Dugan, is about a fabulous Israeli counterterrorism agent (Sandler) who has a bulging crotch and deadly hands (he karate-chops Palestinian machine guns into carrot sticks). Zohan, however, has had enough of "the hate." After an epic contest with his nemesis—an extremist Palestinian warrior known as the Phantom (John Turturro)—Zohan fakes his own death, leaves the tumultuous Promised Land for the slightly less crazy New World, and settles in a mixed Arab and Israeli neighborhood in New York, where he works as a hairdresser in a Palestinian-owned beauty salon. "Zohan" burlesques a host of solemn and bloodstained issues and turns warriors into sex hustlers and would-be American Rotarians. The movie is crude beyond belief; many liquid substances (hummus, etc.) are thrown around; and there are knowing jokes about the way Israelis speak English and make a living in America—jokes that may puzzle anyone west of the Monongahela.—*D.D.* (6/23/08) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

CHRIS AND DON: A LOVE STORY: Quad Cinema. **GET SMART:** In wide release. **LOVE COMES LATELY:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. **THE LOVE GURU:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Special screenings. June 27 and June 30-July 3 at 7 and 9 and June 28-29 at 5, 7, and 9: "Razzle Dazzle: The Lost World" (2006-07, Ken Jacobs). ♦ The films of Danny Lyon. June 25 at 7: Program 4, including "El Otro Lado" (1978). ♦ June 25 at 9: Program 5, including "The Destiny of the Zerox Kid" (1969). ♦ June 26 at 7: Program 6, including "Media Man" (1994). ♦ "Essential Cinema." June 28 at 4:30: The films of Georges Méliès, Program 1 (1899-1907). ♦ June 28 at 6: The films of Georges Méliès, Program 2 (1904-09). ♦ June 28 at 7:30: The films of Georges Méliès, Program 3 (1903-09). ♦ June 29 at 8: "The Flower Thief" (1960, Ron Rice).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through July 3: "Directors' Fortnight at 40." June 25 at 5 and 9:15: "Acéphale" (1969, Patrick Deval; in French). ♦ June 25 at 6:50: "Le Lit de la Vierge" (1969, Philippe Garrel; in French). ♦ June 26 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Trip" (1967, Roger Corman). ♦ June 27 at 3, 6, and 9: "The Salamander" (1971, Alain Tanner; in French). ♦ June 28 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Foster Child" (2007, Brillante Mendoza; in Tagalog, English, and Visayan). ♦ June 29 at 2 and 6:50: "La France" (2007, Serge Bozon; in French). ♦ June 29 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Before I Forget" (2007, Jacques Nolot; in French). ♦ June 30 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Change of Address" (2006, Emmanuel Mouret; in French). ♦ July 1 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "On Fire" (2006, Claire Simon; in French).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—The films of Tatsuya Nakadai. All films are in Japanese. June 25 at 1, 3:20, 5:40, and 8 and June 26 at 1 and 3:20: "Sword of Doom" (1966, Kihachi Okamoto). ♦ June 26 at 6:30 and 9:15: "Onimasa" (1982, Hideo Gosha). ♦ June 27 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Goyokin" (1969, Gosha). ♦ June 28 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Yojimbo" (1961, Akira Kurosawa). ♦ June 29 at 1, 3:45, 6:30, and 9:15 and June 30 at 1, 3:45, and 9: "High and Low" (†). ♦ June 30 at 7: "Portrait of Hell" (1969, Shirô Toyoda). ♦ July 1 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Age of Assassins" (1967, Okamoto).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through July 22: "Homage to Yves Montand." July 1 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "Womanlight" (1979, Costa-Gavras; in French).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—The New York Asian Film Festival. For complete program information, visit www.subwaycinema.com. June 26 and June 29 at 1: "Love on Sunday" (2006, Ryuichi Hiroki; in Japanese). ♦ June 26 at 9:15: "Kala" (2007, Joko Anwar; in Bahasa Indonesia). ♦ June 27 at 1:30: "Action Boys" (2008, Jung Byoung-Gul; in Korean). ♦ June 27 at 5:30 and July 1 at 7: "M" (2007, Lee Myung-Se; in Korean). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." June 27-28: "Mad Max" (1979, George Miller).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Still Moving." June 25-26 at 1:30: "It Should Happen to You" (George Cukor, 1954). ♦ "Celebrating Summer." June 25 at 6 and June 26 at 8:30: "Bonjour Tristesse" (†). ♦ June 25 at 8 and June 26 at 5:30: "A Day in the Country" (†) and "Smiles of a Summer Night" (1955, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ "Salvador Dalí: Creator/Collaborator." June 25 at 6 and June 28 at 2: "Impressions of Upper Mongolia—Homage to Raymond Roussel" (1975, José Montes-Baquer; in French), "Chaos and Creation" (1960, Dali), and "Destino" (1946-2003, Dominique Monfrey). ♦ June 25 at 8 and June 28 at 5: "Babaouo" (2000, Manuel Cussó-Ferrer; in Catalan). ♦ "Zeitgeist: The Films of Our Time." June 26 at 6 and June 30 at 8:30: "Careful" (1992, Guy Maddin) and "The Heart of the World" (2000, Maddin), introduced by the director. ♦ June 26 at 8:30 and June 29 at 5: "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" (1964, Jacques Demy; in French), introduced by Maddin. ♦ June 27 at 6: "Let's Get Lost" (1988, Bruce Weber), introduced by the director. ♦ June 27 at 8:30: "Poison" (1991, Todd Haynes) and "Dottie Gets Spanked" (1994, Haynes), introduced by the director. ♦ June 28 at 7: "Privilege" (1990, Yvonne Rainer), introduced by the director. ♦ "Flaherty at MOMA: The Films of Bahman Ghobadi." Except where noted, all films are in Farsi. June 27 at 8: "Turtles Can Fly" (2004). ♦ June 28 at 2 and July 2 at 8: "A Time for Drunken Horses" (2000; in Farsi and Kurdish). ♦ June 28 at 4:30: "Half Moon" (2006-07). ♦ June 29 at 2: "Tambourine" (2003) and "Life in Fog" (1999). ♦ June 29 at 3:30: "War Is Over" (2003).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000, ext. 344)—"Cabaret Cinema." June 25 at 9:30: "Brigadoon" (1954, Vincente Minnelli), introduced by Liza Lerner, the daughter of the writer Alan Jay Lerner.

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"2008 Human Rights Watch International Film Festival." June 23 at 6:30, June 25 at 8:45, and June 26 at 3:30: "Critical Condition" (2008, Roger Weisberg). ♦ June 24 at 6:15, June 25 at 3:30, and June 26 at 9: "USA vs. Al-Arian" (2007, Line Halvorsen; in Arabic). ♦ June 24 at 9 and June 25 at 1 and 6:15: "This Way Up" (2007, Georgi Lazarevski; in Arabic) and "Open Heart" (2006, Claire Fowler; in Arabic and English). ♦ June 26 at 1 and 6:15: "Letter to Anna" (2008, Eric Bergkraut; in Russian and English). ♦ The films of Satoshi Kon. All films are in Japanese. June 27 at 2:30, June 28 at 4:30, and June 29 at 9:15: "Perfect Blue" (1998). ♦ June 27 at 4:15, June 28 at 6:15, and July 1 at 4:20: "Millennium Actress" (2001). ♦ June 28 at 2:30, June 29 at 7:15, and June 30 at 2: "Tokyo Godfathers" (2003). ♦ June 28 at 8:15 and June 29 at 1: "Paranoia Agent," Part 1: Chapters 1-7 (2004). ♦ June 29 at 4:15 and July 1 at 6:15: "Paranoia Agent," Part 2: Chapters 8-13 (2004). ♦ June 30 at 4 and July 1 at 2:30 and 9:10: "Paprika" (2006).

READINGS AND TALKS

NUALA O'FAOLAIN TRIBUTE
Frank McCourt, Paul Muldoon (the poetry editor of this magazine), Fintan O'Toole, and others honor the Irish writer, who died earlier this year. With music by the vocalist Susan McKeown. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 212-868-4444. June 24 at 7.)

"LITERARY DEATH MATCH IN THE PARK"
The roving reading series "Park Lit," which presents writers in public spaces, brings *Opium Magazine's* humor-writing competition to Sara Delano Roosevelt Park. Gabrielle Mitchell-Marell, John Williams, Debbie Kuan, and Amy Shearn will try to best one another in ten minutes or less, before a panel of judges consisting of the writer Jeff Gordinier, Ben Greenman (an editor at this magazine), and the comedian Julie Klausner. (E. Houston St. between Chrystie and Forsythe Sts. 212-625-9048. June 25 at 6:30.)

THE PHILOCTETES CENTER
The center, which is situated in the New York Psychoanalytic Institute and is charged with fostering the study of imagination, turns its attention to jazz improvisation, as the clarinettist, saxophonist, and composer Don Byron joins the jazz educator Lewis Porter for an evening of performance and discussion. (247 E. 82nd St. 646-422-0544. June 25 at 7.)

HAPPY ENDING MUSIC AND READING SERIES
This series, in which writers and musicians are forced to "take one public risk" (such as revealing their PIN numbers or playing a tricky cover song), wraps up for the season on June 25 at 8, with appearances by the writers Marisa Silver, Nicky Dawidoff, and Sloane Crosley and by the multidisciplinary artist Nina Katchadourian, who will go out on a musical limb. (Happy Ending Lounge, 302 Broome St. No tickets necessary.)

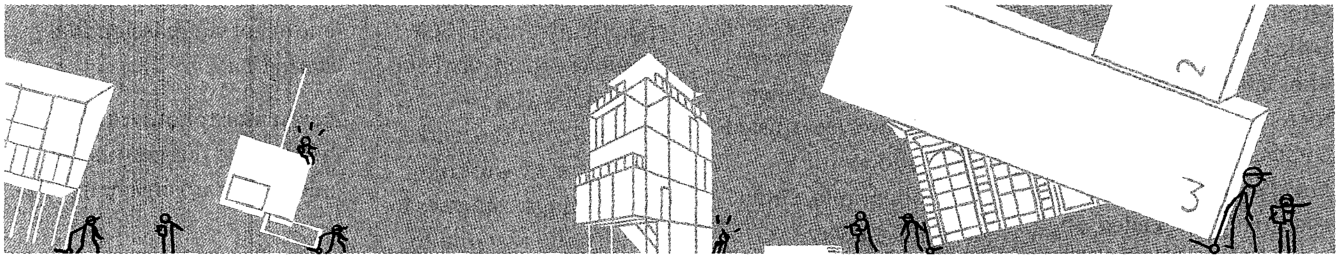
ABOVE AND BEYOND

"BROOKLYN RECORD RIOT"
Everyone knows that the music business is in turmoil and that CD sales are collapsing. (According to the Recording Industry Association of America, sales fell more than seventeen per cent last year and just over twelve per cent the year before that.) Suddenly, though, old-fashioned vinyl records are hot: the R.I.A.A. says that sales of LPs jumped thirty-six per cent last year. How many people know that? Though only 1.3 million LPs were sold in 2007 (compared with more than five hundred and eleven million CDs), the group of vinyl lovers is growing, and retailers have responded. "Target is now selling turntables," says Steve Gritzan, the proprietor of Iris Records, an eleven-year-old vinyl-record shop situated in a converted Jersey City pharmacy. On June 29 from 11 to 8, Gritzan is inaugurating the "Brooklyn Record Riot," at Warsaw, a club in the ballroom of the Polish National Home, in Greenpoint. It brings some thirty-five dealers from as far away as Quebec to hawk platters at all price points and in all genres. Check your iPod at the door. (261 Driggs Ave. For more information, visit www.irisrecs.com.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Are you male? Are you of large size? Do you have an intense desire to walk down your driveway and pick up your newspaper in true mafioso style? If the answer to all these questions is yes, then head to **Christie's** on June 25 and pick up Tony Soprano's signature morning outfit: a dark-blue thigh-length Guy Laroche robe with white tank top, pale-blue boxer shorts, and leather slippers. This and other costumes from "The Sopranos"—including the blood-drenched tank top from the night Uncle Junior almost whacked Tony—are being auctioned off by James Gandolfini to benefit the Wounded Warrior Project, a charity for wounded Iraq-war veterans, as part of the house's end-of-season pop-culture offering. Christie's "Ocean Liner" auction, held later on the same day, is sterner stuff. Nothing sells like the Titanic disaster, and the house will offer an evocative piece of ephemera from the ship—a life preserver, one of only six known to exist, found on the coast of Nova Scotia—as well as a second-class passenger list taken by a twelve-year-old survivor. The sale also includes stylish fixtures from various famous luxury liners, including an Art Deco mantel clock (in green-citron onyx and ormolu glass) from the Queen Mary. The week ends with one of the house's periodic Interiors auctions (July 1-2), which features a selection of vintage couture (including an evening dress from 1958 and a resin-and-rhinestone necklace from 1990, by Yves Saint Laurent). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

NEWYORKER.COM

Visit the Goings On blog, at www.newyorker.com/go/goingson, for additional cultural coverage and commentary.



"Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling," at MOMA.

LAURENT CILLUFFO

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
BLACK LIGHT
July 4–9

BAM's annual Afro-Punk Festival kicks off with "A Panther in Africa," Aaron Matthews's documentary about Pete O'Neal, a member of the Black Panther Party who fled the U.S. in 1969 and has lived in Tanzania for three decades. Other films include Bill Gunn's 1973 horror film, "Ganja & Hess," and "Up Tight!," Jules Dassin's 1968 remake of "The Informer" with an all-black cast. (718-636-4100.)

THE THEATRE
PLAY BALL
July 5–27

Sean Hayes, Jane Krakowski, and Cheyenne Jackson star in the "Encores! Summer Stars" production of "Damn Yankees," at City Center. John Rando directs. (212-581-1212.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
HAMPTONS MELODY
July 11–27

After a summer spent in league with Leon Botstein's Bard Music Festival, the Music Festival of the Hamptons, which has a distinguished heritage of its own, is going it alone this year. Its season begins with a gala concert by the Brussels Chamber Orchestra honoring the late Roy Scheider, a Sagaponack resident. (800-644-4418.)

ART
PREFAB FIVE
July 20–Oct. 20

In conjunction with its upcoming show "Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling," MOMA has invited five architects to display full-sized prefab houses—including Lawrence Sass's plywood "House for New Orleans," designed to shelter victims of Hurricane Katrina—in an outdoor space west of the museum. (212-708-9400.)

NIGHT LIFE
EARTHLY DELIGHTS
Aug. 8–10

Liberty State Park, just across the Harbor in the Garden State, becomes a music lover's paradise with the "All Points West" festival, featuring Radiohead, Jack Johnson, the Roots, and other acts. (www.apwfestival.com.)

AARP: Founded on the simple premise that no one should have to live in a chicken coop.

In 1947 on a meager pension, it was all one retired teacher could afford.

That's when Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, a retired high school principal, made a shocking discovery. On a visit to a former teacher, she found the woman living in an old chicken coop, in poor health and unable to afford medical care.

Ethel got mad. She also got organized. After helping that first teacher, she turned her efforts to helping others with a campaign to obtain affordable health insurance for retired teachers. Over 40 companies turned her down, but she persevered and eventually succeeded. She soon discovered that many other older people needed help as well, and in 1958, she founded AARP.

Today as the nation's leading membership organization — nearly 40 million strong — AARP remains committed to championing the needs of our members and the future of every generation.

We do this by focusing on the five things every generation shares:

- The need for health
- The need for financial security
- The need for community
- The need to give back to society
- The need to enjoy life

Meeting these needs and ensuring the quality of life for all as we age is no small task. It requires a unique three-part organization.

AARP, the parent, is a strong nonprofit, nonpartisan advocate for consumer rights and provides trusted information with our publications, voter education guides, research and a website that cover the issues our members care about most.

The AARP Foundation is our charitable arm. It provides services to both members and nonmembers — especially the most vulnerable in society. Our Foundation delivers direct services such as the nation's largest free, volunteer-run tax assistance program and legal advocacy work to support the rights of older people across the country.

Finally, AARP Services, Inc. makes available products and services designed specifically for the 50+ consumer — many of whom might otherwise be excluded from the market. We do this by working with leading businesses to identify and respond to the ever-changing needs of Americans as they age.

These relationships not only help shape the marketplace, but also earn revenue that helps AARP achieve its mission of leading positive social change and delivering value to members.

When she founded AARP 50 years ago, Ethel proclaimed that "an army of useful citizens" can do what no one person can. Today we at AARP champion her dream and serve all generations through vigorous action and by never forgetting the one act of compassion that started it all.

Learn more about AARP's history and our continuing mission at aarp.org/champion.

THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

On October 7, 2002, in Cincinnati, Ohio, George W. Bush delivered the defining speech of his Presidency. In the face of "clear evidence of peril" from a regime harboring terrorists and weapons of mass destruction, he declared, "we cannot wait for the final proof—the smoking gun—that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud."

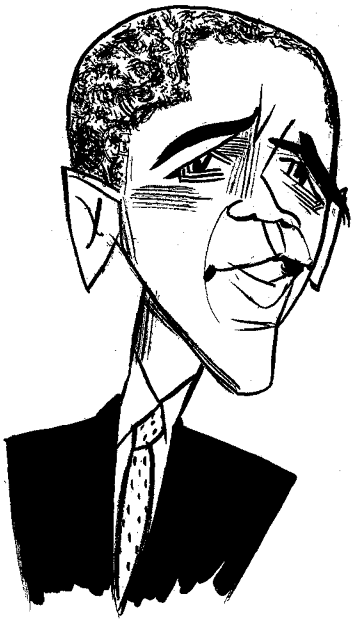
Five days earlier, a forty-one-year-old Illinois state legislator had given a momentous speech of his own, although few recognized it as such at the time. "I don't oppose all wars," Barack Obama told a few hundred Chicago protesters, adding:

> I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences. I know that an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the recruitment arm of Al Qaeda. I am not opposed to all wars. I'm opposed to dumb wars.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

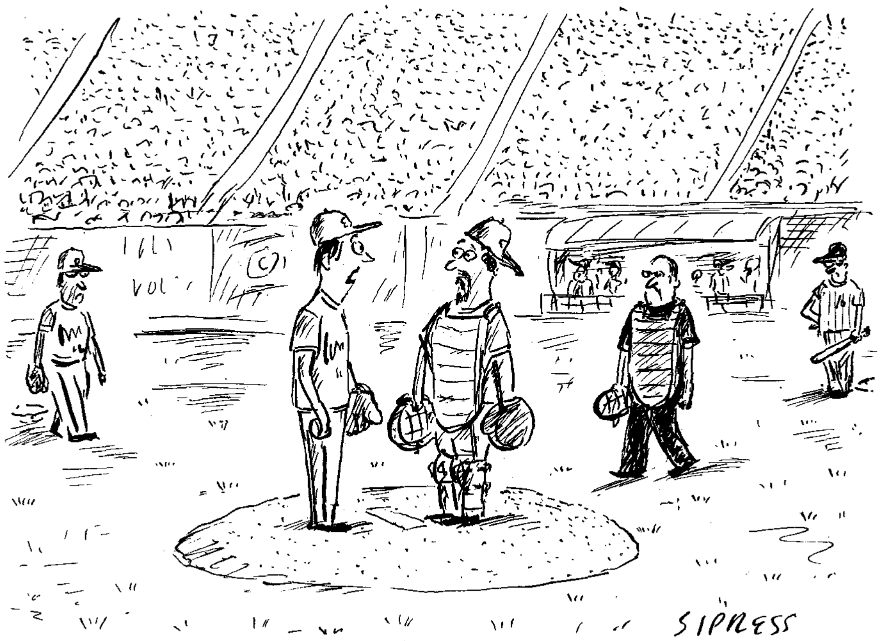
After the attacks of September 11, 2001, Bush discovered a big idea for his Presidency. He would bring down a tyrant, crush terrorism, and impose democracy and peace on what his regent, Vice-President Dick Cheney, called "freedom-loving peoples of the region." As the world now knows, that idea was based on faulty intelligence reports and executed with a fatal disregard of political reality in the Middle East and at home. By the time of the 2008 Presidential campaign, Bush's approval rating had shrunk from sixty-seven per cent to thirty-seven per cent, the Republican Party was coming apart, and Obama's 2002 speech had proved a precondition for an astounding climb to victory this month as the Democratic Party's presumptive nominee for President.

Still, sixteen months after announcing his candidacy, and after twenty-six Presidential debates and thousands of public-speaking engagements, Obama remains a puzzle to many voters. Almost as dedicated a policy wonk as Hillary Clinton and arguably more centrist in his economic beliefs, he offers plenty of specifics about what needs to be done. But his captivating eloquence and his slogan—"Change We Can Believe In"—have seemed to lift him dangerously high above the concrete. He has proved his steadiness of purpose without clearly defining his priorities. What, above all, does he intend to accomplish if he is elected President?



Obama is said to have been dissatisfied with the slogan. If so, he has a point. The "change" he advocates can be understood as a pragmatic correction to the radical policies and the ineptitude of the Bush brigade. His political departure is a kind of return. He has written two unusually revealing books—one describing how he came to be who he is, the other delineating how he proposes to reclaim the qualities that once made America so admired. He argues that the United States must relearn the fundamental lessons of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and its own long journey toward a more perfect union, and then apply them to the global upheavals of the twenty-first century.

In his books, Obama emerges not as the personification of cool projected onto him by his young adherents—or as the disdainful élitist suggested by his offhand remark about a "bitter" working class—but as something of a square: someone who doesn't have to strain to talk about "values," God, and family. His eerily objective self-analysis is matched by his lawyerly ability to see things from the perspective of those on the other side. In January, after Obama uttered a few words of praise for Ronald



"I know I could keep my slider down if they would just fire the manager."

Reagan in an interview with newspaper editors, Hillary Clinton and John Edwards rushed to condemn his apostasy. But he meant what he said. In 2006, in "The Audacity of Hope," he had written, "Reagan spoke to America's longing for order, our need to believe that we are not simply subject to blind, impersonal forces but that we can shape our individual and collective destinies, so long as we rediscover the traditional virtues of hard work, patriotism, personal responsibility, optimism, and faith."

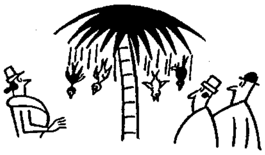
The general consistency of Obama's policy views—with an occasional bald deviation, as on the public funding of his campaign—is a contrast to John McCain's erratic shape-shifting. McCain opposed the Bush tax cuts as skewed toward the rich, and unsustainable; now he wants to extend them forever. He co-sponsored a relatively humane immigration bill; now he disowns it. He deplored the torture of detainees at Guantánamo; now he attacks the Supreme Court's decision granting them the constitutional right to challenge in federal court their continued detention as "one of the worst decisions in the history of this country."

Over the years, Obama has carefully calibrated his political message, and he has won a grudging respect among some conservatives. In *The New Republic*, Bruce Bartlett, a Treasury official in the Reagan and Bush père Administrations, writes that "Obamacons"—libertarians, disillusioned neoconservatives, even a few supply-siders—have been pushed "into Obama's arms." In *The American Conservative*, Andrew J. Bacevich, a professor of international relations and history at Boston University, complains, "To believe that President John McCain will reduce the scope and intrusiveness of federal authority, cut the imperial presidency down to size, and put the government on a pay-as-you-go basis is to succumb to a great delusion."

Obama promises to tell voters what they need to know and not what they want to know. It's a risky strategy, and one he doesn't always follow, but when he put it into effect in April, by attacking McCain's proposed summer gasoline-tax holiday, he helped his campaign more than he hurt it. Last week, he denounced McCain's latest reversal, on offshore drilling. But he needs to go further. A year ago, he likened "the tyranny of oil" to that of Fascism and Communism, saying, "The very resource that has fueled our way of life over the last hundred years now threatens to destroy it if our generation does not act now and act boldly." This is the kind of unequivocal message that Obama needs to develop. By telling just such inconvenient truths, Al Gore has inspired a worldwide movement to arrest climate change. The next President could be its most powerful leader. Obama will not rouse voters by getting lost in a tussle with McCain over the virtues of cellulosic ethanol. He can, however, make voters part of the solution by helping them understand that the greedy oil companies, the failing auto industry, and the craven Congress will not redeem themselves until consumers demand that they do so by making some inconvenient changes of their own. A little more audacity will yield a lot more hope.

—*Dorothy Wickenden*

WHAT DO WE WANT DEPT.
SMELLY TREES



The ginkgo, a.k.a. the maidenhair tree, or the duck's-foot tree, is remarkable in many ways. It is a living fossil, dating to the early Permian era. It has no close relatives (classification: *Plantae*, *Ginkgophyta*, *Ginkgoopsida*, *Ginkgoales*, *Ginkgoaceae*, *Ginkgo*, *Ginkgo biloba*), and one of its chief characteristics is hardiness: ginkgos in Hiroshima survived the atomic bomb. Ten per cent of all trees in Manhattan are ginkgos, making it the borough's third-most-common species. There is also the matter of its odor. Each fall, the mature female—as dioecious gymnosperms, ginkgos come in genders—produces ovules that, once fertilized, develop into bunches of seeds, each consisting of an inner kernel encased in a soft, fuzzy skin. The seeds look like green cherries and contain butyric acid, the smell of which has been variously described as "rancid butter," "sour milk," "sh*tberries," and "dog crap." The Anti-Ginkgo Tolerance Group put it this way, in a recent proposal:

> We are here to solve the problem of the Ginkgo tree commonly known as vomit trees. . . . The Ginkgo tree is widely known by most people but not by name. Walking down the street on a beautiful October evening your moment of tranquility is rudely demolished by the smell of old cheese and vomit.

The members of the A.G.T.G. are few but spirited. The committee was formed in January, under the aegis of

Teens Take the City, a Y.M.C.A. program designed to teach young people about local government, and one recent afternoon at the Grosvenor Neighborhood House, on the Upper West Side, its ranks numbered three: Tevin Perez, seventeen; Jackson Sansoucie, seventeen; and Daniel Maldonado, eighteen. The plan was to pass out pamphlets urging citizens to call 311 if they encountered the smelly seeds.

Perez, wearing a rumpled white button-down, khakis, and a puka-shell necklace, was the first to arrive. Seated at a table in a basement room with pocked blue walls, he and the group's adviser, Stephen Lehtonen, said that, walking to a pizzeria one afternoon, the group had been inspired by a forty-foot ginkgo, on the front lawn of the nearby Frederick Douglass Houses, that particularly stunk. Perez likened its scent to "rotten eggs in a rare form."

"What we haven't discussed is the cultural-anthropology side of this," Lehtonen said. "Some people view the tree differently. When we're out on the street, you should ask why they like it."

"O.K., I'll look up some ginkgo recipes," Perez said. He pulled out his cell phone and flipped open the keyboard.

Daniel Maldonado arrived, fresh from his graduation ceremonies, at St. Agnes. Maldonado, who has dimples and was wearing a gold ring with a scarlet stone, said that a clutch of ginkgos on Ninety-third and Columbus had been bothering him since he was a kid.

"You sound like somebody they go up to on NY1," Perez said, squinting at the screen of his phone. "Hey, they use it to relieve hangovers!"

Soon, Jackson Sansoucie straggled in—shoulder-length curls, jeans, a rub-on tattoo of an eagle. As Sansoucie talked about how the odor of ginkgos was "reminiscent of dairy products" and flatulence, Lehtonen, steering the conversation back to community activism, asked how one would offer a flyer to a young lady.

"Don't hit on them," Perez offered. "Don't say, 'You look nice in that dress. Want a flyer?'"

To the streets. On the corner of 103rd and Broadway, a man wearing sunglasses approached Maldonado: "What is it, before I touch it?"

"It's about trees—they have odor problems."

"That, at least, is a natural smell!" the man yelled. "You should be advocating cleaning up the subway, getting homeless people showered and fed." He skulked off, up Broadway.

"That guy needs a hug," Maldonado said.

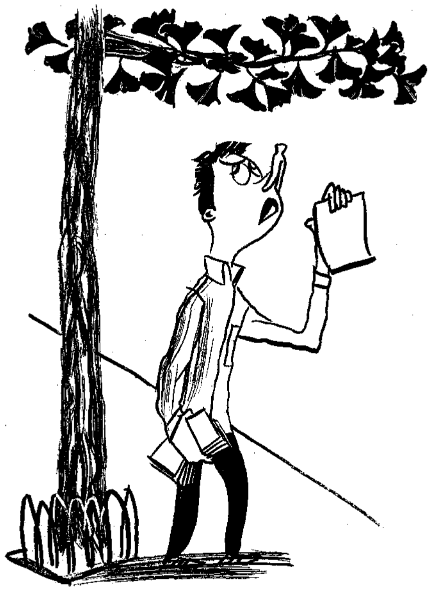
On the other side of Broadway, Perez was stalled on the northwest corner, in front of a kebab joint. He was having wind problems, flyers suctioning to his face, like some sort of killer birds. Sansoucie, on the same block, had adopted a roving technique, and a shouted slogan: "Stop the smell!"

Back across the street, Maldonado had had the misfortune of handing a flyer to a big, opinionated woman—red nails, pepper-spray key chain—who actually worked at 311. "You see seeds on the sidewalk?" she said. "So, then, the complaint is that they're never sweeping the sidewalk. . . . But if the smell is coming from the grassy area you should direct your complaints to Housing Authority, not Sanit."

The woman kept telling him off, and she'd drawn a crowd. "So how about just having the tree removed?" a young woman, straddling a mountain bike, ventured.

"You can't even make a complaint, because it's *nature*," the woman replied. "You gonna cut down a banana tree because it has too many bananas?"

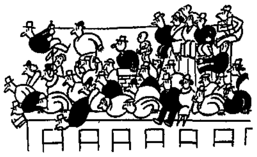
Eventually, the stack of flyers was depleted, and the boys headed back to Grosvenor House. They passed a Coco Helado cart, and everybody got ices. Then they returned to the basement for some Ping-Pong. Maldonado bounced the ball, about to serve. Perez cut in from the sideline: "Your serve stinks like ginkgo trees!"



—*Lauren Collins*

HOOPS

SCHOOL NIGHT



Lance Stephenson, the best high-school basketball player in New York City, was in midtown one recent Monday night to watch an early cut of a new documentary in which he stars. The film, "Gunnin' for That #1 Spot," was directed by Adam (MCA) Yauch, of the Beastie Boys, and it chronicles an exhibition game that Stephenson played in, at Rucker Park, in the summer of 2006. The movie, which comes out this week, the day after the N.B.A. draft, includes quickie portraits of eight young basketball players who participated in the game, several of whom—Michael Beasley (Kansas State), Jerryd Bayless (Arizona), Kevin Love (U.C.L.A.)—are expected to be top picks. Stephenson is the youngest of them—he is just about to finish his junior year of high school—and was the only one who showed up at the screening.

Half an hour before the film began, Stephenson sat on a bench outside the screening room, typing into his Sidekick. His phone had run out of juice during the school day, and so he had taken a seat near an electrical outlet. His entourage milled around nearby: dad, Lance, Sr. (Stretch); mom, Bernadette; two-year-old brother, Tookie; an aunt; a teacher. His uncle, Lawrence Britt, who is only a few months older than Stephenson, sat beside him, typing on his own Sidekick. Britt had a curly figure, like a misshapen paper clip, shaved into his hair, and someone asked him when he'd had it done.

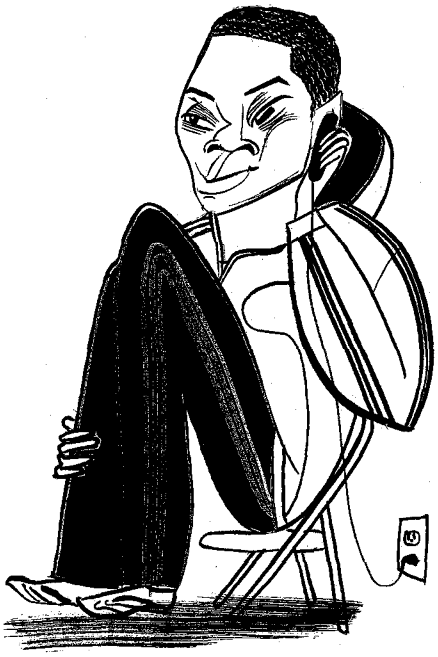
"I dunno," he said, reaching up to trace the pattern with his fingers. "A few days ago maybe?"

"What, are you kidding?" Stephenson said, looking up from his Sidekick. "You did that yesterday. You don't remember?"

"Oh, yeah," Britt said. The boys

laughed, and then went back to typing.

Stephenson plays for Abraham Lincoln High School, the public school in Coney Island that produced Sebastian Telfair and the Knicks' enigmatic star Stephon Marbury. In their youth, Bassy and Steph were already viable celebrities—talkative, full of smiles. Stephenson, by contrast, can be remote, almost sullen, but, by most people's reckoning, he is the superior athlete. That afternoon, Lincoln had played a scrimmage against St. Anthony's, a Catholic school in Jersey City that is ranked first in the country. Stephenson scored twenty-six points in the game, which ended in a draw.



Lance Stephenson

The screening finally began. Stephenson and his dad sat in the front row. They both slouched low in their seats, their long legs stretched out. Stephenson appears only briefly in the first forty minutes of the film, so he got up to check his phone. At one point, the cameras follow Kevin Love around the relative luxury of his home in Lake Oswego, Oregon, where his mother discusses his nutritional plan. Later, Love is shown working out with a personal trainer and shooting free throws using a rebounding machine. When Stephenson's image was finally projected onto the screen—he is two years younger, walking down a Coney Island street with his father, and pushing Tookie in a stroller—he straightened in his seat. In the game scenes, Stephenson appears to be having a lot of fun, throwing down slam dunks, and even, at one point, dancing a little jig. In the fourth quarter, muscling his way to a rebound, he smacks Love in the face with his forearm, busting open his lip.

When the film was over, Bill Feinberg, a sports marketer, and a close family friend of Love's, found Stephenson at the back of the theatre, checking his messages.

"So how did you like the movie?" he asked.

"Oh, uh, I liked it a lot," Stephenson replied, barely looking up.

Feinberg told Stephenson that Love had called and sounded angry about his lip. Stephenson looked stricken. "Really?" he asked softly, missing the joke. "Kevin's not mad at me anymore, is he?"

By the time the screening was over and the crowd spilled out onto the sidewalk, it was almost ten-thirty. A homeless man tried to sell Yauch an issue of a street paper with the Beastie Boys on the cover. "This is so weird," Yauch said. (He bought five copies.) A few feet away, Stephenson and his family discussed getting dinner at the Hawaiian Tropic Zone, next door, but Coney Island was a forty-five-minute drive away. "It's pretty late," Bernadette said as they headed toward the car. "And, anyway, Lance has homework to do."

—*Joshua Hersh*

LITTLE GREEN MEN DEPT.
SPACE DIRT

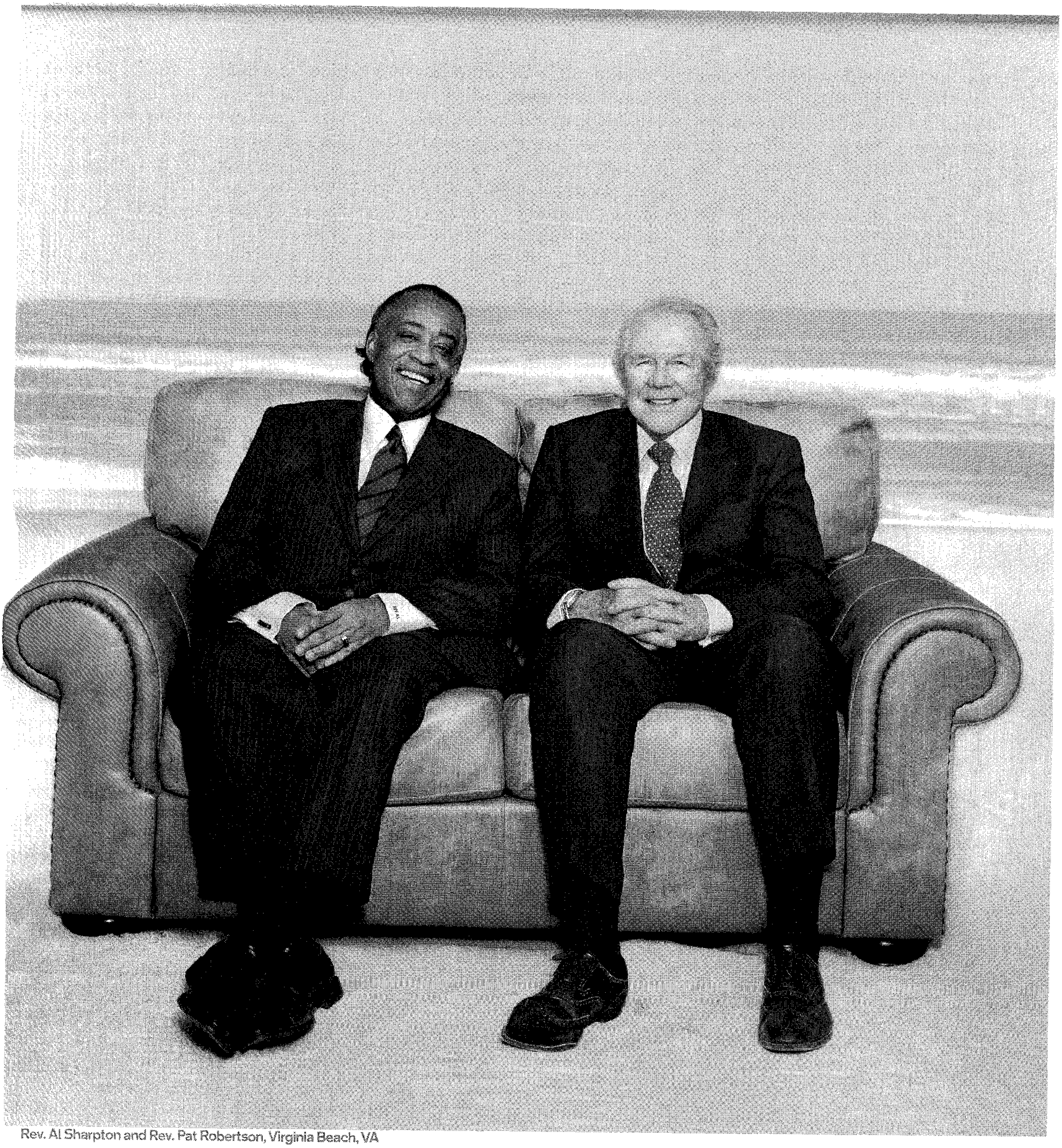
Stephen Gorevan, a co-founder of Honeybee Robotics, has thick snow-white hair that seems to float above his head like a cloud, and he wears glasses with pronounced black frames. He greeted a recent visitor to Honeybee's offices, on Thirty-fourth Street, by producing a magnifying glass from his pocket and pointing toward a framed photograph of Mars on the wall. "Want to look at something neat?" he said.

The photo showed what some scientists believe is an ancient salt-sea bed near the Martian equator, and was taken by the NASA rover Opportunity, in 2004. To the visitor, it looked like a generic spacescape: rocks and dust and not much in the way of color. Gorevan handed over the magnifying glass. "Do you see anything near my pinkie?" he asked. It was hard to say. "Something segmented?" Gorevan suggested. After some hesitation, the visitor wondered, "Is it supposed to be an animal?"

"We're forbidden to utter those words," Gorevan said, and then bounded down the hall to his office overlooking the Hudson River, sidestepping the large reddish hunks of basalt that were scattered about on the carpet: simulated interplanetary surfaces collected from the Mojave Desert, southwestern Spain, and the Canadian Arctic, for drilling practice. He retrieved a copy of the latest *Aviation Week* from his desk. The cover showed the Phoenix spacecraft, which had recently managed, after several failed attempts, to shake some dirt collected on the northern plains of Mars into an onboard oven, for chemical analysis. (Scientists at the University of Arizona, which is leading the Phoenix mission, celebrated by dancing to K.C. and the Sunshine Band's "Shake Your Booty.") "When you have something land on Mars, we start wearing our T-shirts, and sleeping and thinking and almost eating Mars," Gorevan said. His shirt read "M.E.R. Development Team," referring to the Mars Exploration Rover project.

Honeybee is a rare breed—a NASA spacecraft contractor in Manhattan. "People in our community are used to Southern California and Texas," Gorevan said, and conceded that recruiting employees was "problematic." (First-generation Americans from City College are the company's prime resource.) But now that the Phoenix has struck a hard white material beneath the Martian dirt, it is Honeybee's own custom-made scoop that is responsible for digging and collecting. The hard white material, Gorevan explained, is presumed to be a kind of "super ice, up to four or five times stronger than sidewalk concrete." His scoop features a rasp which resembles a tile-cutting bit that you might buy at Home Depot. It spins at five thousand revolutions per minute and is unaffected by extreme low pressures and temperatures.

Ice equals water equals... life? "They never say they're looking for life directly, because that would be setting themselves up for huge failure," Gorevan said, of NASA. "They're looking for 'the condi-


Rev. Al Sharpton and Rev. Pat Robertson, Virginia Beach, VA

It's American to disagree. It's also American to come together in the face of a challenge. And few challenges are as urgent as global climate change. Take one minute to join us at wecansolveit.org and add your voice to millions of others. Together we can solve the climate crisis.

Join we today.

©2008 The Alliance for Climate Protection

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions for life to have evolved.' The mantra is 'Follow the water, and we'll get there.'" He added, "To me, this is ultimately all reconnaissance for sending people. I mean, we have to check the place out."

Gorevan led his visitor on a brief tour of the engineers' workspace, which resembled both a metal shop and a HAZMAT treatment facility, with "Nitrogen Warning" signs, a thermal vacuum chamber, and a "clean room," where a test was being conducted for a five-hundred-piece mechanism that will be sent to the Red Planet in 2009, to aid in collecting rock samples. "I did have a dream once that there was this great 'Eureka!' press conference about how we've discovered life on Mars, and it was actually the dead skin of one of our employees," Gorevan said.

Back in his office, the television was tuned to Channel 367, NASA-TV, which showed astronauts floating around inside the space shuttle Discovery. Gorevan mentioned the photograph in the hallway again and, using a red globe on his desk, indicated the spot where the Opportunity rover had landed: the Meridiani Planum. Honeybee also built the rock-abrasion tool (or RAT), that the Opportunity uses for its own shallow digging. "I have this fantasy that that bug out there is actually a fossil of a segmented worm," Gorevan said. He recalled his feeling of intense relief when a photograph came back from the rover following its landing and its initial successful employment of the RAT, in 2004. "I have kids," he said. "I'm supposed to say I was happy when my kids were born. I was much happier when this image came through."

—Ben McGrath

DEPT. OF DIPLOMACY

SECOND ACT

When friends and acquaintances of Joan Blumberger Olden, a former fashion executive in New York, received an invitation recently to a cocktail party honoring François Bozizé, the President of the Central African Republic, it came as a surprise to many of them not only to discover that there was such a country as the Central African Republic but also to learn that its President had appointed Olden an Ambassador and member of his Cabinet. "You say 'Central Africa,' and people think of central Africa," Ambassador Olden said the other day.

The Ambassador's own familiarity with the C.A.R., a landlocked nation—just south of Chad—that is one of the world's least developed, resulted from her business interests in North Africa. In 1999, Olden had been appointed the president of the Mary McFadden apparel company; but when McFadden later went out of business Olden turned her attention to her own company, the Omnis Group, which imports medical equipment into Libya. ("Selling is selling," she said with a shrug.) She met President Bozizé's brother Jean-Roger Ouefio in Paris, and made the first of three visits to the C.A.R. last year. In her capacity as a Cabinet member, she aims to be there once a month. "I do special projects for the President," she explained.

Ambassador Olden was in Bangui, the capital city, just last month, with her twenty-five-year-old son, Michael, who lived in Tripoli for four years and is now based in Switzerland. (Another son, who is twenty, is at George Washington University.) "We spent a week there, doing drives and exploring the different restaurants," she explained. The Oldens sampled local fare: fish wrapped in banana leaves and steamed in a tomato-based broth. "They put it on the plate so that the leaves unfold like a flower," Olden said. "It's delicious. It's a Pygmy dish."

Olden had stayed in a hotel overlooking the Ubangi River, on the far side of which lies the town of Zongo, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. "In the courtyard of the hotel, there are these huge mango trees, and everyone takes them for granted," she said. "I was sitting there with Jean-Roger, and I said, 'Gosh, in New York these can be so expensive,' and he said, 'Here they just drop off the tree!' He couldn't remember the last time he ate one." In the evenings, for fun, Olden and her son liked to drive out to look at an illuminated sign reading "BANGUI" that is set into the hillside, "like the Hollywood sign." The climate was hot, she said, but not oppressive. "We're indoors, obviously," she said. "It's like everything else—you drink a lot of water, and there's air-conditioning. It's fine. I'm not a complainer."

The party for Bozizé was held at Doubles, the members-only club in the basement of the Sherry-Netherland Hotel. A representative from the office of Governor Paterson was in attendance, and read aloud an official greeting to the President, who came to power in a coup in 2003. "I'm coming to New York for the fourth time, and before the governor was not interested. Now he's interested," the President said. Olden had also secured the presence of Mia Farrow, who had a medal of the Central African Republic pinned to her lapel. Farrow, it turned out, had also been named an Ambassador by Bozizé.

"I think the people of C.A.R. are the most kind and the most abandoned on this planet," Farrow said. "C.A.R. is being torn apart by crosscurrents of violent armed groups." In two trips to the C.A.R., she visited the troubled northeast of the country, which borders Darfur, and the northwest, where rebel forces opposing the government have displaced thousands of residents, and where, according to Human Rights Watch, the Presidential Guard itself has been implicated in the killing of civilians. "I don't know what the precise definition of a collapsed state is, but surely it could not be very different from what we are seeing in C.A.R.," Farrow said. "People are eating leaves and cassava roots. They are drinking swamp water, and have no access to safe water. They come out of the bush like spectres, covered in dust, saying, 'Our children are dying.' "

In the plush cool of Doubles, President Bozizé greeted Ambassador Farrow warmly. "She knows the country better than the President himself!" he announced to the assembled guests. "It's a country the size of Texas," he said. "I think everyone should make a visit. There's six hundred and twenty-three thousand square kilometres of space. That's a lot of space for everybody."

—Rebecca Mead

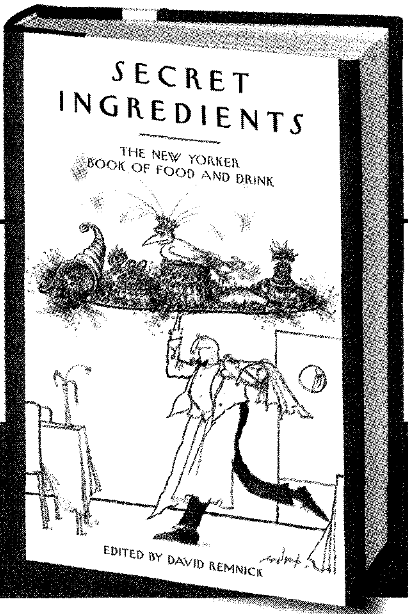
FROM THE NEW YORKER

A FEAST OF DELICIOUS WRITING ON FOOD AND DRINK, SEASONED WITH A GENEROUS DASH OF CARTOONS.

THE MENU

WOODY ALLEN	on dieting the Dostoyevsky way
ROGER ANGELL	on the art of the Martini
JULIAN BARNES	on a gourmand's final diet
NOAH BAUMBACH	on the Zagat history of my last relationship
ANTHONY BOURDAIN	on what you don't want to know about restaurants
BILL BUFORD	on oysters
JOHN CHEEVER	on the sorrows of gin
ROALD DAHL	on a connoisseur unmasked
DON DELILLO	on Jell-O
M.F.K. FISHER	on the trouble with tripe
MALCOLM GLADWELL	on building a better ketchup
ADAM GOPNIK	on the crisis in French cooking
JIM HARRISON	on his thirty-seven-course lunch
JANE KRAMER	on the writer's kitchen
ANTHONY LANE	on cooking by the book
CHANG-RAE LEE	on eating sea urchin
A. J. LIEBLING	on Paris and appetite
JANET MALCOLM	on the Alice B. Toklas cookbook
STEVE MARTIN	on menu mores
ALICE McDERMOTT	on sex and ice cream
JOHN McPHEE	on Euell Gibbons, master forager
JOSEPH MITCHELL	on the beefsteak clubs of New York
SUSAN ORLEAN	on the homesick Cuban restaurant
DOROTHY PARKER	on dinner conversation
S. J. PERELMAN	on a hollandaise assassin
CALVIN TRILLIN	on New York's best bagel

AND
MUCH
MORE



Selected from the magazine's plentiful larder,
Secret Ingredients celebrates all forms of gustatory delight:
humor pieces • cartoons • classic profiles of great chefs and great eaters • memoirs • short stories • poems • offerings from every age of THE NEW YORKER's eighty-year history

RANDOM HOUSE | www.secretingredientsbook.com

ANNALS OF RELIGION

THE NEW EVANGELICALS

This election, a growing movement presents a challenge to the religious right.

BY FRANCES FITZGERALD

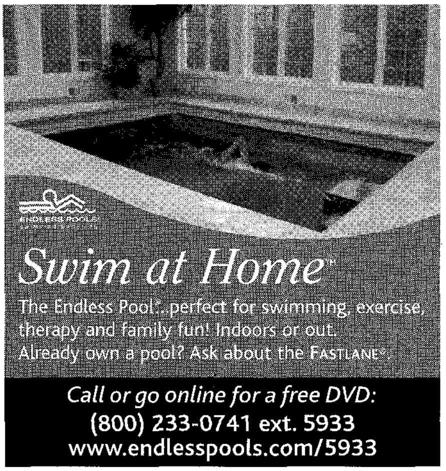
Just four years ago, during the last Presidential election, leaders on the religious right were the only white evangelicals whose voices were heard in the public arena. In their own gatherings, they proposed such things as the abolition of the capital-gains tax, a war on radical Islam, and an end to the "myth of separation" between church and state, but they concentrated their public campaigns on gay rights and abortion, the two issues that have resonated most strongly with evangelicals and helped to bring them into the Republican Party. Under the leadership of James Dobson, the founder of Focus on the Family, Tony Perkins, the president of the Family Research Council, and others, including Richard Land, the official in charge of public policy for the Southern Baptist Convention, activists organized "values voters" with the help of ballot initiatives in eleven states for constitutional amendments to ban gay marriage. In November, all the initiatives passed, and George W. Bush took seventy-eight per cent of the white evangelical vote—a record for a Presidential candidate. Because evangelicals make up a quarter of the population, the religious right claimed credit for giving President Bush his margin of victory.

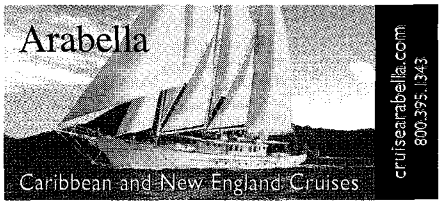
This year, however, is very different. During the primary season, religious-right leaders could not unite around a candidate. On Super Tuesday, thirty per cent of evangelical Republicans voted for John McCain, the favorite of moderates and independents. Even more surprising, a third of evangelicals in Missouri and Tennessee chose to vote Democratic, as did, a month later, forty-three per cent in Ohio. Meanwhile, Barack Obama—unlike John Kerry, in 2004—has been trying to win over white evangelicals. In televised discussions sponsored by religious organizations, he has spoken of his faith, and framed issues such as health care and the war in Iraq in moral terms. In recent weeks, he has met privately with evangelical leaders and started to reach out to values voters. These efforts suggest that he is hoping to do as well as, if not better than, Bill Clinton, who won a third of the white evangelical vote in both 1992 and 1996. Mark DeMoss, a public-relations expert whose firm has worked for Focus on the Family and for Franklin Graham, is among those who think he can.

This view is based in large part on the fact that religious-right activists are no longer the only evangelical leaders speaking out. Since 2004, influential pastors and the heads of many large faith organizations have set a new national-policy agenda, one founded on their understanding of the life of Jesus and his ministry to the poor, the outcast, and the peacemakers. The movement has no single charismatic leader, no institutional center, and no specific goals. It doesn't even have a name. But it is nonetheless posing the first major challenge to the religious right in a quarter of a century.

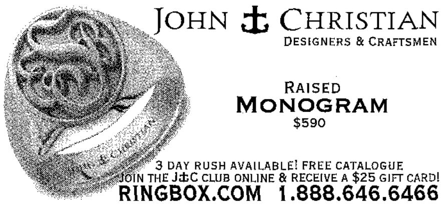
Dr. Joel C. Hunter, the senior pastor of Northland church in Orlando, Florida, who every week preaches to ten thousand people in his church and through the Internet, is one of the new leaders. Long active in community affairs, he has become an activist on the national level. He has lobbied Congress for legislation to curb global warming, pressed for comprehensive immigration reform, and denounced the virulent anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Republican primaries. He has worked with a group of evangelicals and secular progressives to try to establish common ground on such polarizing issues as abortion and the role of religion in public life. "I think the way we have been dealing with differences in this country simply doesn't work," Hunter told me recently. He is on the board of the National Association of Evangelicals, and with his

General Tours
World Traveler
OUR 61ST YEAR
Affordable Luxury
Singapore & South Asia
Laos • Vietnam • Cambodia
Thailand • India • China
Call or click for a free catalog
800-221-2216
www.GeneralTours.com/Singapore
UNIQUELY Singapore


ENDLESS POOLS
Swim at Home™
The Endless Pool™...perfect for swimming, exercise, therapy and family fun! Indoors or out.
Already own a pool? Ask about the FASTLANE®.
Call or go online for a free DVD:
(800) 233-0741 ext. 5933
www.endlesspools.com/5933

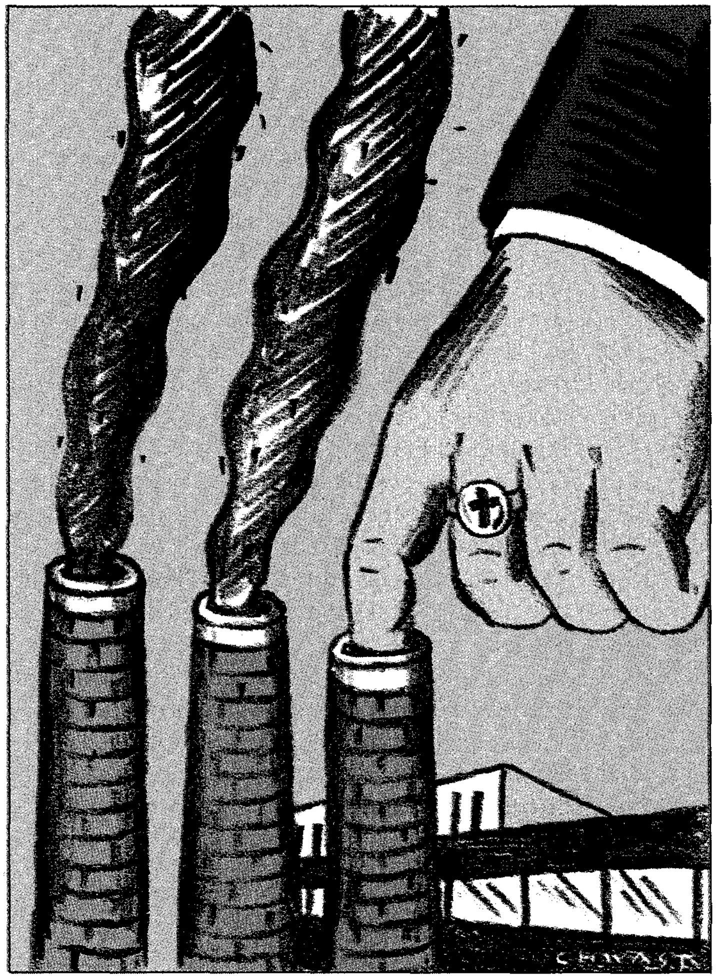

Arabella
Caribbean and New England Cruises
cruisearabella.com
800.395.1343

Fear of Public Speaking?
Gone. Quickly. Guaranteed.
Executive Program. Now $2,497
ConfidentlySpeaking.com
Call (888) 669 2426


JOHN ♣ CHRISTIAN
DESIGNERS & CRAFTSMEN
RAISED MONOGRAM
$590
3 DAY RUSH AVAILABLE! FREE CATALOGUE
JOIN THE J&C CLUB ONLINE & RECEIVE A $25 GIFT CARD!
RINGBOX.COM 1.888.646.6466

The Retreat at Sheppard Pratt
✦ Treating all psychiatric conditions
✦ Intermediate length of stay
✦ Elegantly appointed environment
Baltimore, MD 410-938-4040 www.retreatatsp.org
The Retreat does not accept insurance.
First class setting ✦ World class care

fellow-members he has condemned Bush Administration policies permitting torture and the inhumane treatment of detainees. He has also twice attended the U.S.-Islamic World Forum, an annual gathering of American and Muslim leaders in Qatar, sponsored by the Brookings Institution. After the first meeting, where Hunter discovered that even the American diplomats assumed that all evangelicals believed that Israel had a Biblical right to the Palestinian territories, he and eighty-three colleagues sent an open letter to President Bush, calling for a two-state solution and justice for both the Israelis and the Palestinians. The statement was "hardly revolutionary," Hunter said, with a grin, "but it was subversive," meaning subversive of the religious right.



Evangelical leaders have been most divided over global warming.

SEYMOUR CHWAST

In "The Future of Faith in American Politics," David P. Gushee, a professor of Christian ethics at Mercer University's school of theology, in Atlanta, notes that the movement's leaders are theological conservatives who share the concerns of the religious right about sex outside of heterosexual marriage, the preservation of the family, and abortion. However, many leaders, such as Hunter, oppose government coercion on issues of private morality, and all have what Gushee calls a "consistent pro-life agenda"—one that accords with Catholic social teachings on war, poverty, and human rights. Moreover, they lack the cultural attitudes descended from the fundamentalist resistance to modernist thought, such as a distrust of science, a rejection of institutional solutions to poverty, and the notion that evangelicals are the saving remnant of Christianity and the American tradition. Religious-right leaders have perpetuated these attitudes and done their best to see that evangelicals continue to regard themselves as an embattled subculture. The new leaders, however, embrace pluralism. Unlike the right, they don't engage in partisan politics, but many of the policies they espouse coincide with those of the Democratic Party. What they aspire to is nothing less than an end to the culture wars and the polarization of American politics.

The movement is new, but there is a sizable constituency for it. According to polls taken in the past four years, half of all evangelicals have substantial differences with the religious right. As Mark Pinsky, a veteran religion writer at the Orlando *Sentinel*, has observed, Sun Belt evangelicalism is very different from that of the old Bible Belt: suburban families trying to get their kids into college don't believe that the earth is only a few thousand years old, and they don't join crusades to post the Ten Commandments in courthouses. Furthermore, they don't like the angry intolerance of the religious right and cringe when they are associated with it. If Hunter and the others succeed in winning over this group, they will either change the Republican Party beyond the recognition of Karl Rove or doom it to electoral defeat for many years to come.

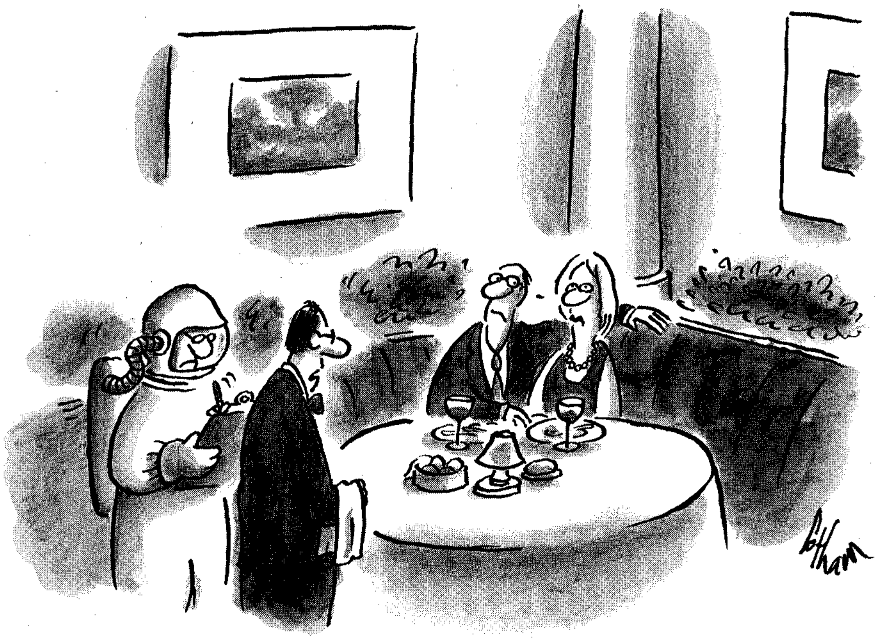
Before 2004, only three evangelical leaders publicly challenged the religious right's agenda: Jim Wallis, of *Sojourners;* Tony Campolo, a well-known Baptist preacher; and Ron Sider, the president of Evangelicals for Social Action. All three founded activist organizations in the nineteen-seventies, but, as energetic and articulate as they are, their constituencies seemed permanently confined to a progressive minority.

Then, just at the moment of the religious right's triumph in the 2004 election, the new movement came to life. In October of that year, the board of the National Association of Evangelicals, an umbrella organization of denominations and churches which claims a constituency of thirty million, voted to accept a position paper laying out seven principles for Christian political engagement. The document, "For the Health of the Nation," called upon evangelicals not only to safeguard the sanctity of life and to nurture families but also to seek justice for the poor, protect human rights, work for peace, and preserve God's creation. The document was worded so as not to provoke a conservative reaction, but the following spring Richard Cizik, the N.A.E.'s vice-president for governmental affairs, and other N.A.E. progressives in Washington moved ahead with an agenda that included lobbying for debt relief for the poorest countries and galvanizing support for legislation to curb global warming.

That summer, Mark Noll, a prominent evangelical historian now at the University of Notre Dame, told a journalist that "For the Health of the Nation" was "an effort to bring out of the background things that have always been there but have been overshadowed by the concentration on life issues.” He added, “Evangelicals don’t want themselves identified as the Republican Party at prayer.” As he suggested, some evangelical leaders had wanted to take new directions for years; by 2005 they were further motivated by their embarrassment at the association of all evangelicals with the Bush Administration.

The advocates for the new agenda have come to include some of the most influential evangelicals, among them Rick Warren, the author of “The Purpose-Driven Life” and the pastor of Saddleback church, in Orange County, California, who is, after Billy Graham, the best-known evangelical preacher in the country. Warren heads a network of pastors and laymen, and just before the 2004 election he sent out a letter to a hundred and thirty-six thousand of them saying that pro-life and pro-family issues should determine their vote. But a few months later he sent the same network a letter urging them to put pressure on Bush to increase foreign aid, provide debt relief, and reform trade rules to help the global poor. In April of 2005, he called upon his congregation to support an effort in Rwanda to alleviate hunger, teach literacy, and slow the spread of AIDS. His ultimate goal, he announced, was to enlist a billion Christians worldwide in the struggle against poverty, illiteracy, and disease. Warren had, it seemed, undergone a form of conversion. “I have been so busy building my church that I have not cared about the poor,” he told pastors in Kigali. “I have sinned and I am sorry.” At an international Baptist convention that summer, he called for “a second Reformation,” one that would be about “deeds not creeds.”

Since then, Bill Hybels, the pastor of the Willow Creek church, in South Barrington, Illinois, and the leader of an association of twelve thousand churches, has put his congregation to work on racial reconciliation in the Chicago area, the global AIDS epidemic, and poverty in Africa. He and others, including the presidents of evangelical seminaries and colleges, have signed well-publicized open letters on issues from global warming to Darfur, and some have criticized the religious right and the policies of the Bush Administration. A pivotal figure in the movement, David Neff, the editor-in-chief of Christianity Today Media Group, has done all three. He has changed his flagship magazine from a fairly conservative publication into one that has taken the lead in discussions of sensitive subjects like divorce and issues like climate change. He drafted “For the Health of the Nation,” and helped prepare a manifesto for the movement, which was released in May. Signed by seventy-three of its leaders, Joel Hunter among them, the manifesto declares that evangelicals see it as their duty “never to be completely equated with any party, partisan ideology, economic system or nationality,” because “that way faith loses its *independence*, the church becomes ‘the regime at prayer,’ Christians become ‘useful idiots’ for one political party or another, and the Christian faith becomes an ideology.”



“Are there any reports of illness at this table?”

There have even been stirrings from within the Southern Baptist Convention. The largest of the evangelical denominations, the S.B.C. has long been dominated by conservatives closely aligned with the right wing of the Republican Party. But in the 2006 election for the S.B.C. presidency dissident pastors persuaded their fellows, via blogs, to reject the establishment candidate. The S.B.C. elected instead Frank Page, a mild-mannered South Carolina pastor who has encouraged the moderates and avoided partisan politics.

“We’re at a watershed in our history,” Joel Hunter told me over lunch at his home in Orlando. “What has passed for an ‘evangelical’ up to now is a stereotype created by the people with the loudest voices. But there’s a whole constituency out there that it doesn’t apply to. Now something is happening. You can feel it like the force of a tsunami under the water.” It was a hot day, but the windows of Hunter’s small house looked out onto one of the numerous lakes in the area. Relaxed and for once without a suit jacket—he usually wears a gray suit, a white shirt, and a conservative tie—he paused while his wife, Becky, a petite blond woman in a tailored dress, poured us coffee. He went on to talk about the roots of Anglo-American Protestantism. “Have you read Gertrude Himmelfarb’s book ‘The Roads to Modernity’? It’s about the difference between the French and the English Enlightenment—the French, who focussed on reason, and the English, who were more theistic and linked reason to acts of compassion.”

Hunter, who is sixty, is trimly built, not tall, and so unassuming that it’s often hard to imagine him as a megachurch pastor. On the days he preaches, he parks his car in the lot farthest from the church so that others are not inconvenienced, and at staff meetings he listens a good deal more than he speaks. He often opens his sermons with folksy stories, but he is something of an intellectual, and more of an introvert than most in his congregation know. To have time to himself, Hunter gets up at four in the morning, and after making his devotions and answering e-mails he goes to the stacks of books piled up on the floor of his study. He reads eclectically in philosophy, science, history, and current affairs, and rereads a Jane Austen novel every year.

Hunter often speaks as if his role in the new movement were just something that fell upon him—and in the beginning that was more or less the case. In the autumn of 2005, Jim Ball, the head of the Evangelical Environmental Network, and Richard Cizik were gathering signatures for an Evangelical Climate Initiative and a statement expressing alarm about man-made global warming and calling for a mandatory curb on carbon emissions. "Millions of people could die in this century because of climate change, most of them our poorest global neighbors," the statement read. Hunter signed it, along with eighty-five other evangelical leaders, and, as a megachurch pastor in a state vulnerable to climate change, he was chosen to do a nationally broadcast television spot for the initiative. After that, he said, "one thing led to another." But Hunter, who quickly saw the potential of the movement, worked hard to see that it did. In the spring of 2006, he published a new version of a book he had written in 1988, when Pat Robertson was running for President, in which he argued that the evangelical right confused the power of the Cross with the power of government and misunderstood the nature of American democracy. Evangelicals, he wrote, should participate in politics—indeed, as Christians and as citizens they had a duty to do so—but they should understand that they constituted a special-interest group, one of many in a pluralist society.

Around the time Hunter's book was published, Roberta Combs, an acquaintance, invited him to succeed her as the president of the Christian Coalition. Founded by Pat Robertson, the Coalition had in the nineteen-nineties been the largest religious-right organization in the country, known for the millions of voting guides it distributed to churches, but it has lost members and financial support in recent years. Hunter's friends were flabbergasted, but instead of rejecting the offer he presented the board with a proposal to turn the Coalition into a grass-roots organization that would help pastors work on issues such as poverty and the environment. In view of the group's financial deficits, the board members agreed, but, a month before Hunter was to formally take office, they parted ways, citing "differences in philosophy and vision." The affair nonetheless brought him national press attention, and since then he has taken on active roles in other national evangelical organizations—Becky has become the president of the Global Pastors' Wives Network—and he speaks all over the country on the issues he cares about.

Hunter, who does not like to be thought of as earnest, told me that he was having more fun than he had had since college. "This is like the most idealistic, visionary time of my life," he said. In fact, he has brought together the two parts of his life that had been separated since the nineteen-sixties.

Born in 1948, in Shelby, a small county seat in northern Ohio, Hunter grew up well outside the evangelical orbit. His father, a decorated Second World War veteran, died of cancer when Joel was four, and his mother became an alcoholic. To support him and his older sister, she worked as a beautician. Three years later, she married a devout Catholic who worked in a carbon-paper factory. Joel attended a Methodist church with his grandparents, and went to public school. In 1966, he enrolled at Ohio University, where he majored in history and government, and was swept up in the student activism of the period. He didn't demonstrate against the Vietnam War, because there were many military men in his family, but, as he remembers it, that was the exception: "If the mashed potatoes were lumpy in the cafeteria, we were out there with placards." He believed that his generation would change the world, and he idolized Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bobby Kennedy. When they were assassinated and the student movement split into angry factions, Hunter's disillusionment was profound. He turned to the religion of his youth, and, on graduating, went to seminary in Indianapolis.

Hunter spent fifteen years in the United Methodist Church, first as a youth pastor in Greenfield, Indiana, where he met and married Becky, who was a college student at the time, and later as a minister of a small rural church and as a pastor in a growing suburb of

THE
NEW YORKER
ONLINE
newyorker.com

BLOGS
newyorker.com/go/blogs

HENDRIK HERTZBERG
Notes on politics, mostly

SASHA FRERE-JONES
Pop music and more

GOINGS ON
Cultural happenings from all over

THE BOOK BENCH
Books, publishing, and the literary life

CARTOONIST OF THE MONTH
Drawings and photographs by Michael Crawford

AUDIO EDITION AVAILABLE AT
AUDIBLE.COM/NEWYORKER

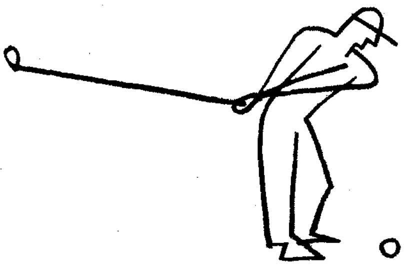
Indianapolis, where, under his leadership, the congregation grew from two hundred to a thousand in seven years. The United Methodist Church was a liberal Protestant denomination, but Hunter, inspired by one of his professors, had become a theological conservative and an evangelical. That hadn't mattered to his congregations or to the denomination, which allowed its ministers latitude as long as they were building strong churches. At thirty-seven, he thought he had everything he could ask for: the second-largest church of its denomination in the state, a good salary (he and Becky by then had three young sons), and a new parsonage. But it made him uneasy. "There's something in me as a child of the sixties that is very suspicious of establishment success," he said. "I questioned if I was just doing it because of the perks. Did I really have what it takes to walk away from it?" He spent three days praying and fasting in a cabin in the woods, and, shortly afterward, accepted an offer from Northland, an evangelical congregation of two hundred people, which had just lost its pastor.

Ten years later, Hunter was preaching seven services a weekend to accommodate five thousand congregants. After 2001, the church found quarters in other parts of Orlando where services could be broadcast simultaneously; last year it completed construction of a larger building next to the old one, which is now linked interactively with Northland congregations at other sites, partner churches overseas, and Internet users.

Many megachurches have sports facilities, a day-care center, a school, and social clubs, but Northland has never had such amenities, and it has never used marketing techniques to attract congregants. It has grown mainly because of the worship services. Hunter doesn't preach pop psychology or self-help messages or a basic introduction to Christianity. Beginning in 1991, he preached a ten-year series on achieving spiritual maturity, with each year devoted to a single topic. He is a populist preacher in the sense that he's a good storyteller, witty and down to earth. But his great gift, according to Reggie Kidd, a professor at the Reformed Theological Seminary, near Orlando, is his ability to find the profound in simple things and to explain difficult concepts in ways that are easy to understand. In 1996, when Hunter felt that the congregation was ready, he changed the emphasis of his preaching from individual faith and mutual service to the need to serve the community as a whole. "He pushed us out," Lori Droppers, a physical therapist who has been going to Northland with her husband and children for more than ten years, said. "It's not a church that wants to gather you in with people of the same mind-set." Sometimes, she said, "I do long for the 'holy huddle,' but it's the right thing to do." Few at Northland have objected to Hunter's recent public advocacy. He told me, "When people have heard you explain the Scriptures for twenty some years, and when they know that you're centered theologically, then when you bring issues like that up they are much more inclined to suppose that it is the next level of spiritual witness."

Asked why the religious right retained such a hold, Hunter began by evoking the sense of alarm that evangelicals felt during the cultural upheavals of the nineteen-sixties and seventies. "When you are angry or afraid, the loudest voices carry the day," he said. Speaking of the Jerry Falwells and Pat Robertsons, he added, "I think they showed some courage and some leadership getting us into the public square. But it's like in the sixties—guys like Eldridge Cleaver and H. Rap Brown. When I heard those guys talk, I thought, That makes me mad, too! I can't believe how this could be happening in our country! But the more you listen the more you go, 'Wait a minute. I see where you're coming from, and that has some legitimacy, but I'm not going to give my life to that.' "

The religious-right leaders were also intimidating. Radio and television evangelists, they built powerful organizations, and they held the microphone. "Who in the world was going to stand up to Jim Dobson?" Hunter asked. All pastors knew how many people listened to Dobson and Falwell and received voting guides from the Christian Coalition, and those who were still building their churches couldn't afford to introduce any kind of controversy. "You have to come to a certain stature in what you've done to even be on a playing field with a Jim Dobson or Pat Robertson," Hunter said. In his view, it took not only a change in evangelical attitudes but also the emergence of a new generation of leaders with power bases of their own to challenge the right.



Hunter and others have come under attack from what Richard Cizik refers to as "the enforcers" of the evangelical community. Rick Warren, for example, has been harshly criticized for inviting Barack Obama to an AIDS conference, and Hybels was attacked for asking Jimmy Carter to speak at a conference on leadership. Warren and Hybels can shrug off such assaults, but some less powerful leaders have removed their names from statements or otherwise backed down. Hunter told me, "In the evangelical community, all you have to do is get accused of compromising your theology and you're automatically labelled a traitor or a heretic or whatever. So I understand the pressure on these guys."

Of all the initiatives the new movement has taken, that on global warming has provoked the most fury from the right. Before the Evangelical Climate Initiative statement was released, in February of 2006, James Dobson, Richard Land, and others wrote to the N.A.E. saying that global warming was not a consensus issue, and they raised enough opposition on the board to prevent Cizik from signing it. The Interfaith Stewardship Alliance, a group supported by Dobson and other prominent right-wingers, argued that man-made global warming was an unproved theory and that policies designed to combat it would slow economic development and hurt the world's poor. Dobson and Tony Perkins, among others, also protested that a campaign against global warming would distract evangelicals from their mission to oppose abortion and support family values; John Giles, of Christian Action Alabama, told the *Financial Times* that it was an attempt to divide evangelicals and weaken the right. The showdown came

THE EVENING IS TRANQUIL, AND DAWN IS A THOUSAND MILES AWAY

The mares go down for their evening feed
into the meadow grass.
Two pine trees sway the invisible wind—
some sway, some don't sway.
The heart of the world lies open, leached and ticking with sunlight
For just a minute or so.
The mares have their heads on the ground,
the trees have their heads on the blue sky.
Two ravens circle and twist.
On the borders of Heaven the river flows clear a bit longer.

RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL

Now comes summer, water clear, clouds heavy with weeping.
Tall grasses are silver-veined.
Little puddles of sunlight collect
in low places deep in the woods.

Lupine and paintbrush stoic in ditch weed,
larch rust a smear on the mountainside.
No light on ridge line.
Zodiac pinwheels across the heavens,
bat-feint under Gemini.

—*Charles Wright*

at the annual N.A.E. meeting in March of last year. Days earlier, Dobson and twenty-four other right-wingers, none of them N.A.E. members, wrote an open letter stating that Cizik had put forth "his own political opinions as scientific fact" and had used global warming to "shift emphasis away from the great moral issues of our time." They went so far as to suggest that Cizik, who had once spoken of the need for population control, might approve of abortion and infanticide, as practiced in China. This time, however, the board supported Cizik, and Hunter defended him publicly.

The conflict then moved to the Southern Baptist Convention. Last June, the S.B.C. passed an official resolution that questioned whether human activity contributes to global warming, and urged Southern Baptists to weigh the economic impact of policies designed to reduce greenhouse gases. Then Jonathan Merritt, a student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, heard a professor say that destroying God's creation was akin to tearing a page out of the Bible. After consulting with S.B.C. theologians, Merritt drafted a statement calling the denomination's engagement with the environment "too timid," and maintaining that "our cautious response to these issues in the face of mounting evidence may be seen by the world as uncaring, reckless and ill-informed." The statement, released in March, was signed by forty-five leading Southern Baptists, including Frank Page.

The new movement has come at a difficult time for the religious right. The death of Jerry Falwell, last May, followed by that of D. James Kennedy, a televangelist and a mainstay of the right, seemed to herald the passing of the founding generation of leaders. Then there was the embarrassment of the Republican primaries. Last fall, religious-right leaders contemplated a field of candidates that included a Mormon from Massachusetts; a thrice-married Catholic from New York; a non-churchgoing Hollywood actor; a senator who in 2000 had called Falwell and Robertson "agents of intolerance"; and a former Southern Baptist pastor. The choice might have seemed clear, but it was not. Pat Robertson, who had been out of step for some time, picked Rudy Giuliani, the candidate all the others thought anathema. Richard Land, who that fall had written that evangelicals ought to support a candidate they agreed with eighty per cent of the time on the moral issues, as opposed to one they agreed with a hundred per cent of the time, because the most moral candidate might divide the vote and allow the least moral to win, made it clear that Fred Thompson was his man. Operating on the same principle, other leaders signalled support for Mitt Romney. Only one of the top leaders came out for Mike Huckabee, and none chose the winner, John McCain. Then, when the televangelists John Hagee and Rod Parsley belatedly endorsed McCain, the Senator had to repudiate them, after Hagee was found to have made outrageous remarks about the Catholic Church and Jews, and Parsley to have attacked Islam. Their views had never been questioned when they supported George W. Bush.

The misfortunes of the right, coupled with the emergence of new evangelical leaders, have convinced a number of observers, notably E. J. Dionne, Jr., of the Washington *Post*, that the era of the religious right is over. Other experts, among them John C. Green, of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, have called the obituaries for the right premature, if only because they have been written several times before. Still, at the National Religious Broadcasters convention in March, Dobson wondered "who will be left to carry the banner when this generation of leaders is gone." He added, "The question is: will the younger generation heed the call?" The next day, Tony Perkins, aged forty-five, made the first bid for the succession. He had just written "Personal Faith, Public Policy," with Bishop Harry R. Jackson, Jr., an African-American pastor with a church outside Washington, D.C., and, at a conference designed to publicize it, the two argued that the religious right was a coalition and that the way to save it was to broaden the agenda to include poverty, social justice, racial reconciliation, and global warming. The book turned out to be a compilation of right-wing bromides about the virtues of self-reliance and the vices of government intervention in a free economy. It was nonetheless an *hommage* to the new movement.

Hunter doesn't predict the imminent demise of the religious right but he believes that the coalition of social, economic, and foreign-policy conservatives that made up Bush's Republican Party cannot last, because the new social conservatives will insist on public as well as private morality, and won't put up with a government that deprives the needy by cutting taxes on the rich and whose foreign policy is directed only toward enhancing American power. "The younger generation, that's what's driving this thing," Hunter said. "We've got a bunch of kids now who are just reminding us, 'Quit playing to the categories. They don't matter. Try to get things done. That's what matters.' " Surveys of younger evangelicals support his view. According to Pew polls, while evangelicals aged eighteen to thirty care more about abortion than their elders, they are less bothered by gay marriage, more concerned about health care and the poor, and more likely to champion environmental causes. In a poll conducted by *Relevant*, a magazine read by young college-educated evangelicals, fifty-five per cent called themselves conservative on issues of personal morality, but only thirty-four per cent said they were economic conservatives, and a mere fourteen per cent said they were conservative on issues such as health care and poverty. Most were against the war in Iraq, and of the two-thirds who said they had voted for Bush a third said they wouldn't do it again.

How much headway the movement is making among evangelicals nationally is a question that won't be settled by the election results in November. For one thing, Americans change their party allegiances slowly. In 2006, seventy-two per cent of white evangelicals voted for Republican congressional candidates, though polls taken before the election showed a much more significant decline in their approval for the Party. The Democrats may well pick up more evangelical votes this year, but for reasons that could be circumstantial. The same polls that reported a third of evangelicals in Missouri and Tennessee and forty-three per cent in Ohio voting Democratic in the primaries also showed that evangelicals were more concerned with jobs and the economy than with gay rights and abortion. That was not the case in 2004, but it was in 1992, when Bill Clinton took a third of the evangelical vote. A lot also depends on the candidates. In Hunter's church, many of the young are Obama enthusiasts, as are many educated young evangelicals. Last fall, *Relevant* readers, when asked who Jesus would vote for, picked Obama over all the other candidates then in the race, Republican and Democratic. In any case, Hunter and his colleagues haven't endorsed a candidate or a political party. What they want is voters like Lori Droppers. "It was simple before—I just voted Republican," Droppers said. "But now I don't know." With the help of her eighteen-year-old son, she was looking up on the Internet all the positions taken by the Republican and the Democratic candidates. "I'm confused," she said. "And Joel is to blame."

The campaign thus far has cheered Hunter. A registered Republican, he voted for Huckabee in the Florida primary on the ground that he was "the first iteration" of a new type of evangelical leader—someone who cared about climate change and the plight of the poor, and didn't take himself all that seriously. "When I am looking for a candidate, I am looking for a person who doesn't have his wallet or his gun where his heart should be," he said at the time.

Hunter claims to be undecided about whom he will vote for in November. He gives McCain credit for having had the integrity "to go against the grain," and he calls Obama "as fresh a face as we've had in a long time." His hope is that whoever is elected will leave the country less polarized, but he's not optimistic about the next several months. "Ultimately, the voices of coöperation will prevail," Hunter said, "but I think it's going to be a battle, and it's going to get very nasty from now until November." ♦

ADVERTISEMENT

Decorate Your Walls

- Thousands of iconic photographs, classic covers and illustrations from Vanity Fair, Vogue, Gourmet, Golf Digest and other magazines.
- Customize your archival print with a variety of premium matting and hardwood frames.

CONDÉ NAST STORE
www.condenaststore.com
Or Call 1-866-493-6507

Free Shipping when you enter promotion code CNSTORE08

© Condé Nast Archive. All Rights Reserved.

SHOUTS & MURMURS

ANIMAL TALES

BY SIMON RICH

ZOHAR LAZAR

Frogs

"Hey, can I ask you something? Why do human children dissect us?"

"It's part of their education. They cut open our bodies in school and write reports about their findings."

"Huh. Well, I guess it could be worse, right? I mean, at least we're not dying in vain."

"How do you figure?"

"Well, our deaths are furthering the spread of knowledge. It's a huge sacrifice we're making, but at least some good comes out of it."

"Let me show you something."

"What's this?"

"It's a frog-dissection report."

"Who wrote it?"

"A fourteen-year-old human from New York City. Some kid named Simon."

(*Flipping through it.*) "This is it? This is the whole thing?"

"Uh-huh."

"Geez. It doesn't look like he put a lot of time into this."

"Look at the diagram on the last page."

"Oh, my God . . . it's so crude. It's almost as if he wasn't even looking down at the paper while he was drawing it. Like he was watching TV or something."

"Read the conclusion."

" 'In conclusion, frogs are a scientific wonder of biology.' What does that even mean?"

"It doesn't mean anything."

"Why are the margins so big?"

"He was trying to make it look as if he had written five pages, even though he had only written four."

"He couldn't come up with one more page of observations about our dead bodies?"

"I guess not."

"This paragraph looks like it was copied straight out of an encyclopedia. I'd be shocked if he retained any of this information."

"Did you see that he spelled 'science' wrong in the heading?"

"Whoa . . . I missed that. That's incredible."

"He didn't even bother to run it through spell-check."

"Who did he dissect?"

"Harold."

"Betsy's husband? Jesus. So this is why Harold was killed. To produce this . . . 'report.' "

(*Nods.*) "This is why his life was taken from him."

(*Long pause.*)

"Well, at least it has a cover sheet."

"Yeah. The plastic's a nice touch."

Dalmatians

"Hey, look, the truck's stopping."

"Did they take us to the park this time?"

"No—it's a fire. Another horrible fire."

"What the hell is wrong with these people?"

Free-Range Chickens

"Well, it's another beautiful day in paradise."

"How'd we get so lucky?"

"I don't know and I don't care."

"I think I'll go walk over there for a while. Then I'll walk back over here."

"That sounds like a good time. Maybe I'll do the same."

"Hey, someone refilled the grain bucket!"

"Is it the same stuff as yesterday?"

"I hope so."

"Oh, man, it's the same stuff, all right."

"It's so good."

"I can't stop eating it."

"Hey, you know what would go perfectly with this grain? Water."

"Dude. Look inside the other bucket."

"This . . . is the greatest day of my life."

"Drink up, pal."

"Cheers!"

(*Laughs.*)

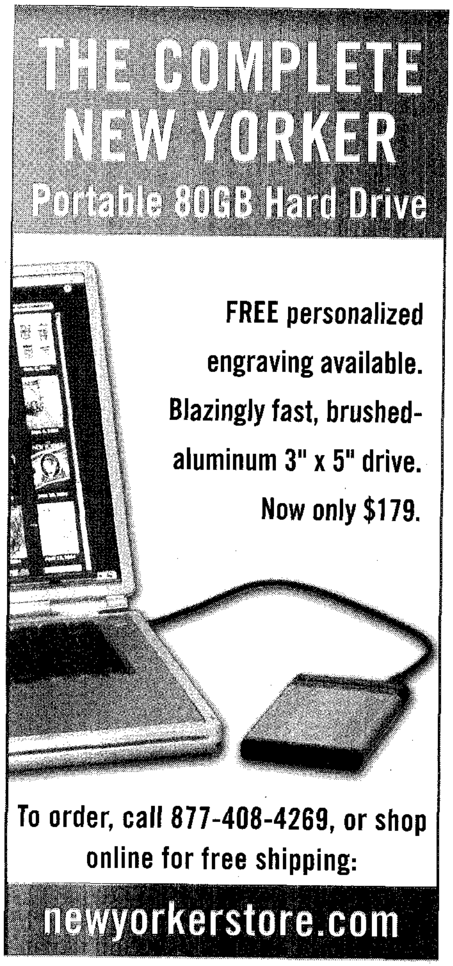
(*Laughs.*)

"Hey, look, the farmer's coming."

"Huh. Guess it's my turn to go into the thing."

"Cool. See you later, buddy."

"See ya." ♦



THE COMPLETE NEW YORKER
Portable 80GB Hard Drive

FREE personalized engraving available. Blazingly fast, brushed-aluminum 3" x 5" drive. Now only $179.

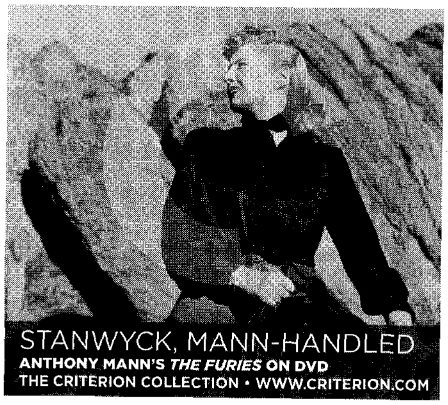
To order, call 877-408-4269, or shop online for free shipping:
newyorkerstore.com

617.855.3570 pavilion@mclean.org www.mclean.harvard.edu

THE PAVILION
at McLean Hospital

Unparalleled psychiatric evaluation and treatment.
Unsurpassed discretion and service.

Consistently ranked the nation's top psychiatric hospital, McLean is an affiliate of Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital, and a member of Partners HealthCare.



STANWYCK, MANN-HANDLED
ANTHONY MANN'S *THE FURIES* ON DVD
THE CRITERION COLLECTION • WWW.CRITERION.COM

PERSONAL HISTORY

ALTERED STATE

Pennsylvania, blackness, and the art of being foreign.

BY ANDREA LEE

When I hear the children hollering between hillsides, I suddenly get Pennsylvania back in my life. Late one May afternoon, my son stands in the garden of our house outside Turin and yells over to the American kids who have moved in across the valley, three anarchic towheads, whose family comes—it seems significant to me—from my home state. *Hey, you guys! Hey!* The children's voices, ringing through woods and vineyards where Roman legions and Napoleonic troops once passed, bring back my own childhood evenings in a Philadelphia suburb, where our shouts had an edge of Arcadian freedom to them, and, as we scrambled through the bushes, the earth leaking shadow into the sky, we always had a sense of territory behind us, all that leaf-colored outback.

Pennsylvania is green—not because of its forests or its ecological virtue but because that's the color with which my synesthetic mind defines that particular state. To me, Maine and Virginia are also green, but the former is a dour Nordic spruce and the latter suggests pea soup. Only the Keystone State—a charmless architectural nickname that also has a certain whimsy—is the proper pastoral shade. I recognize it at once, when in a history text I first read William Penn's dreamy yet transpicuous instructions for the layout of Philadelphia:

> Let every house be placed in the middle of its plot, so that there may be ground on each side for gardens or orchards or fields, that it may be a green country town which will never be burnt, and always be wholesome.

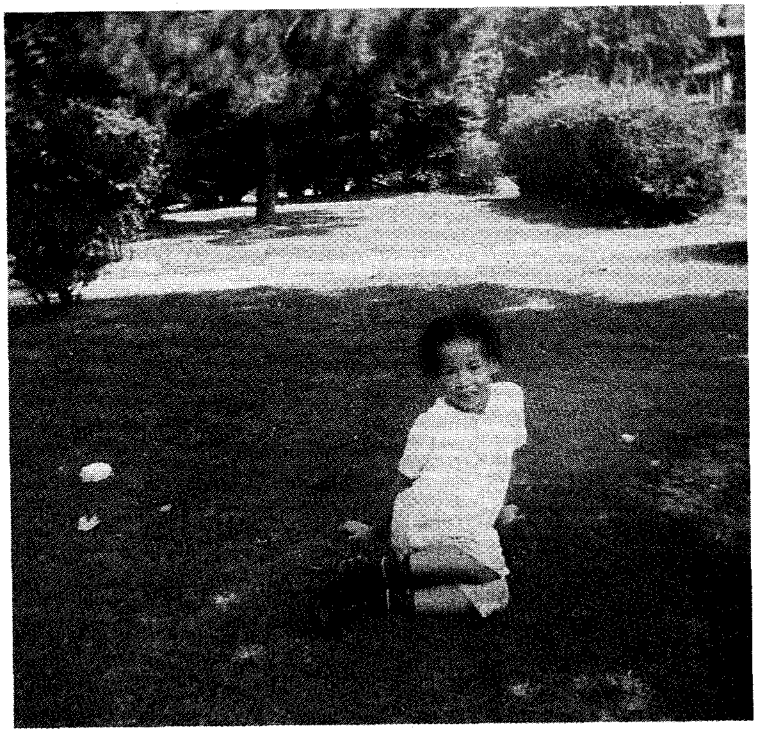
His green suggests both utopian ambition and the kind of nostalgia for a nonexistent perfect past that Gatsby feels, gazing at Daisy's green light. It is the green of hope, a color that Benjamin West captures in his iconic painting of the glade beside the Delaware, where Penn and other tricorned Quakers are striking a treaty with the Lenape Indians. It's the shade that European philosophers see when they first gaze over the Atlantic and envision Eden in the virgin New World forests, the same woods that inhabit Pennsylvania's name.

Of course, Pennsylvania has other colors: fieldstone gray; mouse-brown pastures; the black of slag heaps, of shadowy faces under the El; red city bricks striped with graffiti; the blued bronze of Penn himself, in a statue whose tyrannical Quaker hat brim for so long stunted Philadelphia skyscrapers. But the green is always there: inexhaustible, ineluctable bequest of Penn the proto-suburbanite, who died virtually bankrupt—sucked dry by his greedy new colony—yet, one imagines, still expectant, picturing those verdant mansions, each on its own wholesome plot.

Writing about my state brings with it a rush of energy that feels almost like love. I'm not sure I love it, but it's mine.

In fact, from childhood on my idea is that Pennsylvania is a nursery place, to be outgrown and left behind as quickly as possible. I do this early, by moving from college in New England to New York and then to Europe, and also by travelling to Asia and Africa. My rare trips home from what I think of as the great world, the world worth conquering, show me a Philadelphia as eroded by the passing years as my mother's face—and, in the background, the rest of the state, still green, but worn and disposable as an old bathmat. I marry an Italian, settle in northern Italy, and begin exploring, both in art and in life, what it means to be a foreigner.

I'm good at being foreign—I learn it as a child. In the sixties, my parents, an elementary schoolteacher and a Baptist minister, are part of a group of black Philadelphians, from the middle-class brick neighborhoods of Christian and Ringgold Streets, who advance into the suburbs with the wary determination of earlier settlers pressing back the frontier. They are all timorously proud of their lawns and their Colonial houses, stockaded in the country clubs they've had to create, ambitious in pushing their children, like small, reluctant Indian scouts, into the new territory of white schools. Good works are part of the deal: with Quaker and Jewish friends, they march in Washington, Birmingham; boycott in Philadelphia; run fellowship weekends, work camps, youth clubs.



COURTESY ALAN LEE

All this with—we kids feel it—a light but unceasing wind of fear whistling at the back of their necks. Fear of the South, its charred nooses and cattle prods such a short drive away, down Baltimore Pike; fear, also, of the poor black masses—our brothers, but oh so removed—slowly combusting in the inner city. We kids, riding bikes, calling our faithful dogs like the kids on TV, feel that we're only half in possession of our domain. There is always a distant murmur telling us that this fat life is not our birthright; always the possibility of running into the bad Catholic kids who throw bottles and shout "nigger" from passing cars; always the chance that a travelling salesman may assume that one's mother, opening the door of the big suburban house in her June Cleaver apron, is not June Cleaver but Hattie McDaniel—the maid. My father, the civil-rights leader, the broad-minded ecumenical Baptist, laughs scornfully when I ask him to plant roses in our front yard. "And have it look like a colored man's garden?" he sneers.

So we are immigrants, but we often revisit the old country: the row houses of North and South Philadelphia. This is where, in earlier years, my mother and her sisters scrubbed their marble steps before tripping off to Girls' High; where my father trudged home from days among hostile white seminarians at Eastern Baptist; where my grandfather, the insurance man, had his family photographed reading in a prim Edwardian group; where an ancient cousin has crowded her whatnot shelves with Moroccan brass and Navajo pottery from her travels with the Negro Women Globetrotters Association. By the time we children visit, the streets of our parents' narrow past are crumbling, full of trash, their stoops furnished with scary nodding men with do-rags and dead eyes. We call on relatives who are too old to move away, who serve us stale coconut cake and complain of bedbugs coming through the walls of the tenement next door.

Still, all the institutions of our lives—the doctor, the dentist, the hairdresser, the caterer, the undertaker—remain in the city. Not to mention my father's church, First African Baptist, its centennial gray bulk rising on Christian Street, its roots extending deep into Philadelphia history. When I was very young, that name, First African, to me carried shameful savage echoes. It's not in any history books. It has little to do with Independence Hall, where powdered aristocrats have left a piece of parchment inscribed with freedom. In my father's church, as his baritone oratory reverberates from the gilt ceiling, as the choir alternates between Bach and spirituals, we hear only about the burdens to be lifted, liberty still to be achieved.

Later, I'm one of the first blacks to enter a rich girls' school in a Main Line suburb. Here, as a teen-ager, I learn how to drug myself with literature. And, spring after spring, I watch as girls with corn-silk hair soar off campus in open cars, bound, I imagine, for supernal débutante parties, nymph dances amid rolling pastures beyond the last commuter stop, in some mystic arch-suburb that is the real Pennsylvania. And is for girls like them, not me.

For them, not me. This is a basic belief, a motive, that sends me away from home and across the Atlantic to a place where, for a long time, I try to shrug off my piece of America.

A car with a passel of sunburned kids and two women: me and my new friend, the neighbor from across the valley and the mother of the boys who shout back and forth with my son. We're driving home through the Ligurian highlands from the beaches of the Cinque Terre, and the boys are clamoring for their mother to tell them stories about her days as a social worker in Pennsylvania.

My friend downshifts, pushes up her swimsuit strap, and launches into a series of tales of herself at twenty-one, a fresh-faced college graduate with a mane of Goldilocks hair, venturing into the drug- and incest-ridden desolation of the country towns of southeastern Pennsylvania.

"Tell us," her boys say. "Tell us about the crazy Mennonite farmer who locked up his daughter. About that gross trailer full of roaches, like moving wallpaper. About the guy who stuck doorknobs up his butt."

The tales are startling for their grotesque humor, for the light they shed on the draggled hinterland between the civilized and the monstrous. The fact that they come from the lips of a small, beautiful blond woman with an overwhelming air of health and normalcy at first makes the details she recounts seem obscene, like toads dropping from the lips of a comely television housewife. I'm briefly shocked that she'd tell our kids this stuff, but soon I see that she's in control of her narrative—the stories are dark, but pruned of complete horror, and even the most bizarre are softened by a luminous compassion. Delivered in her clear voice, with that flat, familiar, mid-Atlantic intonation, the stories take on the eerie pedagogic grandeur of fairy tales. And I get caught up, too, guffawing in amazement. Staring out the window at the passing landscape, where plummeting valleys succeed ruined castles like illustrations from a gothic novel, I'm startled to find that my cast-off state, Pennsylvania, has become romantic as well.

My new neighbors have been transferred to Italy for two years. My friend and her husband are both from Altoona, a crumbling red brick railroad city near the Juniata River, almost at the center of the state. They have known each other all their lives, and their parents and grandparents have known one another all their lives. Now their rambunctious family forms a travelling homeland still magically connected to that landlocked region, where there are school friends, cousins, acres that bear their names. They are the best American travellers I have ever encountered—adventurous, courteous, without pretensions. They impress even my traditionalist Italian husband, who is shocked by the barefoot wildness of the boys, but won over by their supremely elegant confidence.

"We come from nothing," my friend jokes to me, over coffee. "Nothing" meaning "not much money." But her half smile suggests that she knows how much they actually come from. What inherited wealth they've brought to the Old World. And how, as I'm beginning to understand, nothing is the beginning of everything. A starting point for stories. Another word for home.

I don't realize that it is a mob until later. The girls of Lenape Division cluster around me under the weak bug-yellow light bulb. It's a kind of light I associate with cabins, with the image of settlers huddled in a frail carapace of logs chinked with mud, wilderness pressing in, the sighing darkness of trees punctuated with panther screams. Of course, the early settlers had no electricity, no smelly brown toilets, no stretched-out screens with girls' initials painted on them in nail polish. This is camp, a Petit Trianon exercise in bushwhacking, somewhere out in the Pennsylvania boondocks. But it's a pioneer expedition for me, because through some lapse in my parents' ordinarily sensitive racial radar I'm the only black girl in all Camp Sunnybrook.

A Baptist institution: fairly open-minded, with only a few campfire hymns. But the kids in this session are all white, and not white like my schoolmates, whose parents in sensible shoes drop by our house for tea, carrying mimeographed sheets about rallies and charity square dances. No, these kids are the white unknown, like the teenagers lounging on car hoods outside the Bazaar, our local dingy proto-mall. Kids from blue-collar suburbs where Northerners act like Southerners—burning crosses on Negro lawns. My parents sometimes slip and call them trash. These campers aren't from Philadelphia but from the far corners of the state, outside Pittsburgh, outside the pious German farm territory; from anthracite towns and half-civilized hollows on the West Virginia border. My mother has gone off with my aunt to explore Paris for ten dollars a day. My father is at a religious conference in Denver. And I'm abandoned to a wilderness sinkhole of unreconstructed Caucasians.

"We'll have to pick this up later. My plane just went down, sharks ate my personal assistant, and apparently I'm winning some kind of surfing competition."

And I love them. At least, I try to suck up to them, particularly my bunkmates: a big-breasted blonde from Williamsport and an evil-tongued will-o'-the-wisp with a pixie cut from someplace called Beaver. I try hard, out of an animal sense of self-preservation, but also because I've always imagined winning the hearts of hateful people. I picture the cross-burners, the baying homicidal crowds in Alabama—and myself, parting the human mass as if it were the Red Sea, sending everyone into a trance of good will with my courage, my good looks, my compelling speech on why all men are brothers. However, the real me is a small, bony, light-skinned black girl with unkempt hair exploding out of its braids into a jungle of frizz. A natural victim, I have no saving charisma, or gift for sports, or talent for anything except scribbling poetry, worthless at any camp.

Yes, I've tried to impress my cohorts with tales of school, travels, my cool brothers. But here I am, under the yellow light, in the free hour before dinner when the counsellors disappear with illicit cigarettes, and the killing fields are open for business.

One girl asks me where my father is.

"In Colorado. At a meeting for Baptist ministers."

"African Baptists," comes a whisper from the gang, and everyone giggles but me.

"Where's your brothers?" another girl, known for her phenomenal number of scabby bug bites, demands.

"At home with my aunt. One is working for a newspaper, the other—"

"Where's your mother?"

"In France."

A hush falls, and then my pixie bunkmate says, "I hear they like people like you there. Does your mother look like you?"

"Yes, she does, she—"

"She must be pretty," my blond bunkmate says. She is big and bossy enough to stop this if she wants to, but she doesn't. "Does she look like you, does she have your same mouth? Your mouth is really cute, isn't it? Your mouth—"

"Nigger lips," the pixie hisses. Something has locked my eyes to my sneakers; I can't stop staring down.

The others crack up, and break into a chant I've heard them whispering before: "Two little nigger boys sleeping in a bed / One fell out and the other one said / I see your hiney, all black and shiny!"

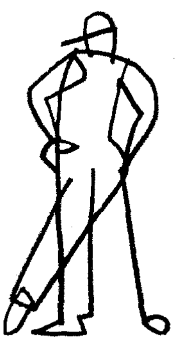
"To think they let these things happen in a *Baptist* camp!" my mother rages, weeks later, when she is back from Europe, with souvenir cameos and kid gloves. As if religion had anything to do with it.

And the day my parents come with my brothers to get me I run to them, melting into them, but for days say nothing true about my two weeks in the woods. That afternoon, my jolly reunited family wants to picnic, to visit local beauty spots. We tour a famous cave nearby, and nobody remarks on my unusual silence as I walk through the shining underground chambers. Mutely, I observe cascades of crystals, stalactites like frozen ghosts, mineral rainbows shining beneath the mountain. A photo taken that afternoon shows me perched on a log outside the cave, still in my Camp Sunnybrook T-shirt. I'm very skinny, almost transparent, and my eyes are fixed on the dark entrance with a wary yet resigned look, as if I already know what monster will peer out at me.

My middle brother is the one who stays. Of the three kids in our family, my oldest brother and I, the youngest, leap in opposite directions, far from Philadelphia. My parents' second son is curiously content to live where he was born. He travels around the world, visits me in Italy and our brother in California, but is immune to the malady that gnaws at his siblings: the idea that life is better over there somewhere, out of sight.

Some facts about this brother:

Always our mother's favorite. When I am in college, I walk into the living room one day and find him and our mother chatting together like an old married couple, and realize suddenly that he has been raised by a completely different woman from the one I know. Our mother, too beautiful and eccentric to relish a Baptist helpmeet's role in the shade of her charismatic husband, has made her second son her distraction and her great love. And who can say whether being your mother's great love doesn't trigger a lifelong passion for your home, your city, your state?



My brother is a historian. At Penn, he runs a famous institute for urban teachers. He gives me a rousing tour of Philadelphia every time I come back, driving along with crunchy folk rock on the radio, pointing out new skyscrapers lifting razor-edged muzzles over streets that still carry wistful bucolic tree names; chatting about his good-looking wife, whom he's known since she was in high school; reminding me that cheese steaks can still gladden the heart; showing me how the blocks around First African have mutated into sleek condominiums, and how, farther away, black men still sit dead-eyed in the morning sun.

He's not religious, but he keeps up with First African. He stops by sometimes to check on the bell-tower fund. And when the oldest parishioners see him, so like our father, they don't so much embrace him as lay hands on him with a wondering pleasure, like Catholics touching a relic.

When I think of my brother, the question in my mind is: How is it that he remains? Among the shiftless, shifting population of the States, staying put is unusual. In an oblique way, more of a virtue.

For decades, he stays; he busts his ass staying. He stays to help his flesh and blood through the mysteries of decrepitude and final salutations. And we, the self-styled adventurers, the voluntary exiles, are the ones who receive the 2 A.M. phone calls, who jump trembling onto planes and walk like timid children into the arrival zone, where our brother is always waiting to pick us up. With his face that is so like ours, transformed by a certain look, a blend of privileged sadness and a knowledge we don't possess.

As proud members of the Lansdowne Friends fifth grade, my schoolmates and I practice the words of Psalm 19 after lunch every day for a week. We're mostly ten-year-olds, lords of this small Quaker elementary school. We will perform the psalm at the Thursday-morning meeting, before the elders and the rest of the school, and our anticipation gives a satisfying gravitas to those orotund King James verses. Excited, the eighteen of us boom so loud that Teacher—all teachers at our school are called Teacher—has to regulate us like a blaring television.

We recite a few verses together, and some lucky showoffs get solos. I've been chosen to chime in with a spectacular line: "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold . . ." And my desk mate, her slanted black eyes gleaming through pink plastic glasses, will complete the phrase: "Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."

We're excited, but not in a stomach-churning way. Since second grade, we've attended weekly meeting: an island in time, a morning half hour suspended in the beeswax smell of the old meeting-house, set beside the school on a golf-green lawn shaded by a fat copper beech. Silence seems a natural element for the Quaker elders, who sit ranged like a tall, dusty row of idols up in the benches facing the rows where we've settled. Unlike the solemn old deacons and church mothers of the African Baptist Church, these sere figures never dress up in suits and floral hats. Instead, they wear sweaters and skirts and trousers in faint colors that match their gray hair and their placid faces, faces that have a historical air about them. Like their last names: Penn, Bacon, Watt. They are all rich, it is rumored, but they don't care about such things. I've seen the oldest and tallest of them, his long springy legs like stilts, carrying an A & P grocery bag stiffly down Lansdowne Avenue. Because, it's said, he doesn't believe in cars.

Most of us kids aren't Quakers. We're a motley flock—black, white, Asian, Gentile, and Jew—and the school runs special assemblies featuring Reform rabbis, freethinking bishops, Eastern Orthodox clergy, and even (to my embarrassment) my own Baptist father, who rambles on, as always, about love. Attending meeting is school tradition, and we memorize verses from the King James Bible, they tell us, because they are English literature.

When it's not our week to recite, we listen to other classes, with the exacting scorn of opera critics. Our hearts pound during our own performances, and afterward our faces glow with smugness.

For a long time, things go without a hitch, but on the morning of Psalm 19 our class fails. First, the short, deep-voiced boy who is our bellwether stumbles over his verse and, purple-faced, shudders to a halt. And I, with gold ready to pour from my lips, simply freeze. At Teacher's frenzied prompting, we burst into the chorus, about errors and secret faults. But the words are a tripwire: somebody's helpless giggle becomes a rout. We double over, choking with uncontrollable laughter.

The beams of the meetinghouse ring with the echoes of our debacle, and we wither under the sidelong smirks of the sixth grade. Still, after a minute, a curious transformation occurs. One by one, we are able to look up at the faces of the elders, which are not severe and condemning, nor yet smiling with the kind of amused indulgence with which grownups greet endearing childish mishaps. Nor do they display any desire to make this a character-building experience. Those old faces are simply present: alert; regarding us and the rest of the hall with a boundless, patient comprehension that raises us to their own dignified level. We let the silence flow back. And, gradually, something becomes clear: a kind of radiant indifference to words, mistaken or correct. What the elders, the Friends, pass on to us this morning is an inkling of how strong silence is. Essential; eternal. But common, in the best sense. Always there, if we can only listen for it. Inside or outside meeting.

I am nineteen, and when I arrive home, in roughly twenty-four hours, there will be a pair of detectives in my bedroom, rifling through my childhood desk, my mother presiding with a bloodless terrified look that will morph into towering maternal rage, when I, clearly unchaste and impenitent, walk in with my lame excuse.

But before all this I'm on a train to somewhere in Pennsylvania that I've never been. And only one other person knows that I am on it. Home from college for the summer, caged among the worn-out stuffed animals on my single bed, determined to cuckold my devoted boyfriend, I'm pursuing an old dream with the ferocious single-mindedness known only to sentimental young girls.

I've had white boys—I made sure to leap over that risky threshold early on—but L., I'll call him, was the first one I wanted and couldn't get. He was an instructor at a summer canoeing program. At fourteen, I ran Class-3 whitewater on the Lehigh, and twisted my guts into knots as L. flirted with older cuties in damp football jerseys. He had hair the color of a new broom, and he wore—get this—an Amish hat. Wore it irreverently, allusively, because he and his people were attached to one of the little allegorical towns out there in Pennsylvania German land. And he was a tormented country dreamer, a bit of a poet, who quoted Berryman and knew about Indian curses. Who ignored me and my crush except to write, for an end-of-summer skit, a sardonic verse about me losing my retainer on the trail. But after camp we began exchanging letters. And, when he sensed in me a more than indulgent budding writer, he poured out his artistic soul in a Donleavyesque stream that made my heart beat fast. Though I sort of hate Donleavy.

Five years of high-minded correspondence, written with very few capital letters. And now I'm on my way to transform all those figments into accomplished desire—virgin no longer, sans retainer, and with a body that I've discovered can make boys do what I want. "Take the Lancaster train," L. writes—we've never talked on a phone—and so, informing no one at home, I grab a dawn local into 30th Street Station, and from there step onto one of the old, rocking Penn Central coaches.

Past the Main Line, with its lacrosse fields and faux châteaux, past Valley Forge, past Wyeth-brown hills into a fat, prosperous land of sappy-leaved sweet-gum forest humming with cicadas, and high midsummer corn glistening like shaken cellophane. It's the space of it that gets me. The fact that I, with my heart pointed like the prow of a ship toward Boston, then New York, then Europe, have all this unexplored territory outside my back door. I scan a map before leaving, and the names tickle me: White Horse. Compass. Ercildoun. Brandywine. Modena. Unicorn. And, of course, the sweetly obvious: Intercourse. Blue Ball. Paradise—an actual train stop, where across rows of soy I catch a glimpse of a gaunt black Amish carriage, poised like a scarab against the dazzling midday sun.

And in Lancaster, down-at-the-heel colonial city, with urban graffiti and a faint smell of manure, I meet my rustic poet. He looks impressed by how I've grown up. In fact I'm irresistible, in tight jeans and cheap, musky perfume. How ruthless girls are! I set my sights with the brisk efficiency of a sportsman going after wild turkey. An awkward stroll through the brick downtown, and I know I can sleep with him. At the same time, I try to ignore other, drearier, realizations. That L., the subject of years of riverine fantasies, won't be joining me in a mystic union of hearts. That I can't quite recall what it was about him that left me, at fourteen, dizzy and speechless. That presently, instead of confessing a sudden kindling of eternal love, he's lecturing me, with pedantic relish, on how the Paxton Boys exterminated many of the innocent remnants of the Susquehannock near where we're standing. His Amish hat has floated away somewhere on the currents of the past, and he's got that unmistakable graduate-student look of having just climbed out of a root cellar.

Still, I've yearned too long to bend to

simple reality. So there is the arrival at his daguerreotype-brown apartment, the smoking of the obligatory joint, and the tumble into bed. Afterward, I keep myself from despair on a strange mattress, an unknown man wheezing beside me, by imagining the huge summer night over the old provincial city, the fields spreading out around it in dark generosity.

Early the next day, after L. leaves for a library or a lecture hall, I dash down the staircase and out of the building, and run through the hot-summer-morning streets to the Lancaster train station as if the Paxton Boys were after me.

Of course, I keep the whole thing secret. And, as secrets do, this one transforms itself in memory. By the time I've graduated, and left for a year in France, L. and even I myself, the silly heroine, are only tiny figures: the kind that landscape artists use to show scale. The lasting vision is of the countryside that I dive into with such careless glee. A landscape that doesn't start out as foreign and then slowly grow familiar, like the Europe that will absorb my future, but a familiar territory that, in a sudden act of possession, grows mysterious, even precious.

By the time I walk through my front door that day, the power of adventure is so much upon me that my hysterical parents have no choice but to accept my offhand lies. Only the detectives—one black, one white, both suave enough to be in a TV series—look at me with cold eyes. Their faces tell me that, in their world, vanished girls are mostly dead ones. And that, wherever the hell I've been, I hardly deserve my luck.

"*Di dove sei?*" the director asks, helping himself to more ricotta. "Where are you from in America?"

We're at lunch in Castelluccio, in an inn made of ugly beige tiles, perched high atop the sweeping Umbrian mountainside, my husband and I and the director, who is an old friend of his from the time my husband was a starving dolce-vita boy working with Rossellini in Rome. There is the director's girlfriend, too, an actress with an angelic face, who today seems surly and restless. It is the first time I've met the director, who is famous in his circle for being a womanizer, as well as for his main cinematic success, an exuberantly gory film about cannibals. I like him more than I thought I would. White-haired, his manner softened by age, he turns his flirtatious attention to me with an air so dutiful that even his girlfriend doesn't mind.

"Pennsylvania," I tell him. "Philadelphia." Ready, as always when talking to Italians, to add the qualifying description: not far from New York.

But the director's eyes light up as he exclaims, "Ah, Pennsylvania, my favorite place in the world!"

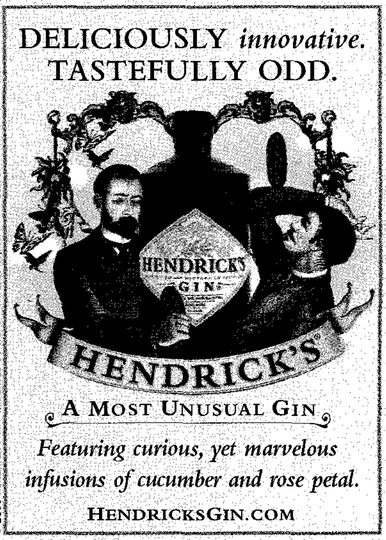
I look at him in disbelief.

The director is sincere. There is, of course, a woman involved. As he reminisces, I picture scenes like a sequence from one of his films. I can see him, thirty years ago, strolling in tight seventies trousers on a dock in Antigua. There he meets a blonde who calls from a yacht that she likes his watch, and then loads him on board like a rentboy. She's a divorcée with an old Pennsylvania last name, and she finds it a lovely indulgence to sail around the world with a filmmaker whose accent sounds like Italian music to her. He likes her money, her monograms, her rangy equestrian figure, but what he likes most of all is her Bucks County fieldstone house, with its rolling pastures and stalls of Thoroughbreds. There is a natural gentleness about the countryside there, he says, his blue eyes opaque with regret.

I'm amused, and for one clairvoyant moment I see Pennsylvania as the director does, as a bungled dream, the perfect life that got away. Hearing someone rhapsodize about your birthplace gives you a disoriented feeling—like talking to a man who long ago had a passion for your mother. Beyond this—and perhaps it is simply an old *tombeur's* easy charm with women—I have the odd feeling that he is speaking to me not as an Italian to a foreigner but as he might to someone who was born and bred understanding his emotional idiom. Someone who can stare, as he does, across land and sea toward a shimmering mirage of America. It's a sly claiming of intimacy, both flattering and unsettling, and I suddenly believe all the stories I've heard about him.

"So what happened?" I ask. "Why didn't you stay?"

The director starts to reply, but his girlfriend breaks in with a laugh. She says, "It's simple—the Pennsylvania bitch threw him out!" ♦


DELICIOUSLY *innovative.*
TASTEFULLY ODD.

HENDRICK'S
A MOST UNUSUAL GIN
Featuring curious, yet marvelous infusions of cucumber and rose petal.
HENDRICKSGIN.COM
© 2008 HENDRICK'S GIN. IMPORTED BY WM GRANT & S. NY, NY. 44% ALC/VOL. SIP RESPONSIBLY.

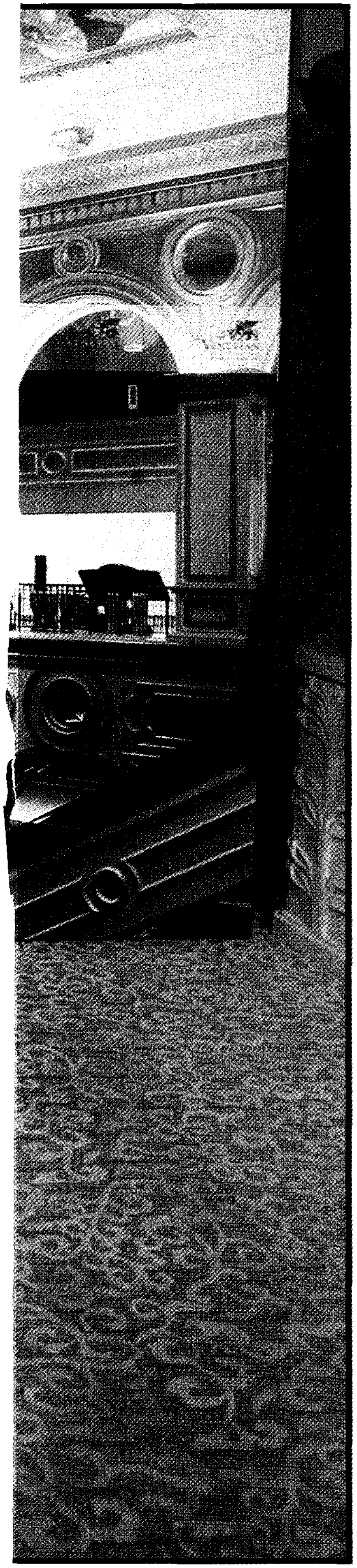
Bonhams 1793
AUCTIONEERS & APPRAISERS
Sargent's *Portrait of a Child*
Sold for $2 million
212 644 9001 bonhams.com/newyork
Principal Auctioneer: Malcolm Barber NYC License No. 1183017

For Women Tired of Struggling With Their Weight
GREEN MOUNTAIN *at* FOX RUN
Proven solutions for weight, diabetes and lifestyle change since 1973.
www.fitwoman.com • 800.448.8106

JAQUES
LONDON
Since 1795
Garden Games - Ping-Pong
Chess - Indoor Games - Croquet
Tel: 1-877-374-8881
WWW.JAQUESLONDON.COM

Where do YOU stand?
BONDAGE of the MIND
How Old Testament Fundamentalism Shackles the Mind and Enslaves the Spirit
www.aldusbooks.com

HARRASEEKET INN
FREEPORT, MAINE
2 Blocks North of L.L.Bean
One Great Country Inn
Two Great Restaurants
Wine Spectator Award of Excellence
www.harraseeketinn.com
162 Main St. Freeport, Maine 800-342-6423



THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

THE BRASS RING

A multibillionaire's relentless quest for global influence.

BY CONNIE BRUCK

Last October, Sheldon Adelson, the gaming multibillionaire, accompanied a group of Republican donors to the White House to meet with George W. Bush. They wanted to talk to the President about Israel. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was organizing a major conference in the United States, in an effort to re-start the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and her initiative had provoked consternation among many rightward-leaning American Jews and their Christian evangelical allies. Most had seen Bush as a reliable friend of Israel, and one who had not pressured Israel to pursue the peace process. Adelson, who is seventy-four, owns two of Las Vegas's giant casino resorts, the Venetian and the Palazzo, and is the third-richest person in the United States, according to *Forbes*. He is fiercely opposed to a two-state solution; and he had contributed so generously to Bush's reëlection campaign that he qualified as a Bush Pioneer. A short, rotund man, with sparse reddish hair and a pale countenance that colors when he is angered, Adelson protested to Bush that Rice was thinking of her legacy, not the President's, and that she would ruin him if she continued to pursue this disastrous course. Then, as Adelson later told an acquaintance, Bush put one arm around his shoulder and another around that of his wife, Miriam, who was born in Israel, and said to her, "You tell your Prime Minister that I need to know what's right for your people—because at the end of the day it's going to be my policy, not Condi's. But I can't be more Catholic than the Pope." (The White House denies this account.)

Perhaps this exchange contributed to a growing resolve on Adelson's part to try to force the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, out of office. Adelson and Olmert had been friendly since the nineteen-nineties, when Olmert was a member of the hard-line Likud Party. Olmert became Prime Minister in January, 2006, following Ariel Sharon's stroke. He, like Sharon, came to recognize the inexorability of Jewish-Arab demographic trends. Olmert declared that a two-state solution was the only way of preserving Israel as a democratic state with a Jewish majority, and he said that he was ready to negotiate with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas. Adelson saw Olmert's actions as a betrayal of principle. He had long wanted to see the Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu returned as Prime Minister, but a revived peace process gave that goal new urgency.

Adelson opposed both Olmert and the peace conference, which was held in Annapolis in late November. The Zionist Organization of America, to which Adelson is a major contributor, ran a full-page ad in the *Times*, headlined, "SECRETARY RICE: DON'T PROMOTE A STATE FOR PALESTINIANS WHILE THEIR 10 COMMANDMENTS PROMOTE TERRORISM AND ISRAEL'S DESTRUCTION." The "10 Commandments" referred to the constitution of Fatah, Abbas's party. "Osama Bin-Laden and Hamas would be proud of Abbas' Fatah Constitution," the ad stated. Two weeks before the start of the conference, a Washington, D.C., think tank that shares office space and several board members with the Republican Jewish Coalition—another organization to which Adelson makes significant contributions—circulated an article on its List-serve which asserted, "Olmert is now chasing peace with the Palestinians at all costs, in a desperate attempt to secure his place in world history."

In an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency news service, Adelson was even more disparaging about Olmert's motivation. Olmert has faced several corruption investigations, all focussed on the period before he became Prime Minister; Adelson suggested that Olmert

Sheldon Adelson's Macao casinos have helped make him America's third-richest man.

"O.K., so I shrank. But you must admit I am brighter."

• •

was trying to divert public attention from them, and was making concessions to the Palestinians in order "to stay out of jail." (The most recent investigation of Olmert, which became public in early May, seems to have increased Adelson's chances of achieving his objective. Olmert has admitted accepting donations, mostly in cash, from an American businessman for his election campaigns since the nineteen-nineties, but he insisted that he did not take any money for his personal use, and denied allegations that he had accepted bribes. He has said that he will resign if he is indicted.)

In early November, the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, Salam Fayyad, who is widely respected in Washington, was scheduled to appear with Tzipi Livni, Israel's foreign minister, at the opening of the Saban Forum, an event in Jerusalem organized by the Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy. Adelson phoned the event's chair, Haim Saban, an Israeli-American businessman, and asked him to contribute to a campaign that he was organizing against the Olmert government; Saban declined. Adelson then asked if he would sign an ad; again, Saban refused. Whereupon, Adelson accused him of funding anti-Israel research at the Saban Center. Saban was surprised, but suggested that when the center's director, Martin Indyk, was next in Las Vegas he and Adelson could talk. Not long afterward, Indyk met with Adelson at his office at the Venetian, on the Las Vegas Strip. According to a person familiar with what happened at the meeting, Adelson berated Indyk for hosting "terrorists" like Fayyad, who he said was a founder of Fatah. Indyk is said to have replied that Fayyad was never involved in terrorism and was not a member of Fatah, and that Adelson's problem was really with Olmert, because he dealt with Fayyad. Adelson stood his ground, and declared that the Olmert government was an illegitimate government and should be thrown out. (Indyk declined to comment on what he said was a private conversation. Saban confirmed his exchange with Adelson.)

Historically, most mainstream American Jewish organizations don't publicly oppose the government of Israel, but in the weeks before and after the Annapolis conference a number of groups were strongly critical. Among them was One Jerusalem, founded in 2000 to protest any peace accord that would include Israeli concessions on Jerusalem. One Jerusalem has received contributions from Adelson. A week before the Annapolis conference, One Jerusalem's chairman, Natan Sharansky—the former Russian dissident, who has moved to the right on the political spectrum since immigrating to Israel—announced a major campaign against any division of Jerusalem, and against the peace initiative. One Jerusalem referred to Annapolis as "the Munich Conference of the 21st century." After Olmert asserted Israel's right as a sovereign state to make decisions regarding its national security, One Jerusalem posted an article on its Web site, headlined, "OLMERT TO WORLD JEWRY: SHUT UP." Later, as Olmert's negotiations with Abbas continued, another piece announced, "OLMERT DECLARES WAR ON ISRAEL."

Adelson has long preferred a low profile in many of his political activities. But one of his maneuvers did appear in the press. He has been a generous donor to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or AIPAC, the dominant lobby of American Jewry regarding U.S. policy toward Israel. Since the nineties, Adelson has helped underwrite many congressional trips to Israel, sponsored by an AIPAC educational affiliate. (Adelson pays only for Republican members.) Last year, he contributed funds for a lavish new office building in Washington, D.C., for the organization. In November, shortly before the summit, he learned that AIPAC was supporting a congressional letter, signed by more than a hundred and thirty members of the House of Representatives, that urged the Bush Administration to increase economic aid to the Palestinians, an initiative that the government of Israel also supported. Adelson was furious.

AIPAC is not accustomed to being attacked publicly from the right; its critics generally charge that its conservative policies toward Israel favor the status quo over a peace accord. But AIPAC has traditionally insisted that it seeks to further a close American-Israeli relationship, whether the government of Israel is left, right, or center. In an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Adelson said of AIPAC's support of aid for the Palestinians, "I don't continue to support organizations that help friends committing suicide just because they want to jump." AIPAC has not made any policy shifts, and it is not clear whether Adelson will continue to contribute to the organization.

When Adelson was merely rich, he wrote checks for causes that he favored and for politicians whom he supported. Occasionally, he demanded to be heard. But he did not expect to play a significant role in U.S. foreign policy, or in Israel's strategic decisions, or in the fate of a sitting Israeli Prime Minister. That was before he acquired many billions of dollars. (He has assets of twenty-six billion dollars, according to a *Forbes* list published in March.) His political expenditures and his expectations have increased proportionately. Not long after Bush's encounter with Adelson last October, an Israeli government representative said that Bush, describing it to another Israeli official, had remarked wryly, "I had this crazy Jewish billionaire, yelling at me." (The Israeli official does not recall the conversation; the White House said that it had no comment.)

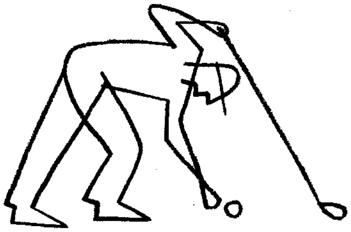
GAMBLING ON MACAO

In July, 2001, Adelson met with a Vice-Premier of China, Qian Qichen, in the historic Purple Light Pavilion, in Zhongnanhai, where foreign dignitaries are often received. Adelson was impressed, recalling later in trial testimony that it was "a very regal looking environment." He was accompanied by Bill Weidner, the president of his company, Las Vegas Sands, and Richard Suen, a Hong Kong businessman with connections to top Chinese officials, who was a friend of Adelson's brother Lenny. Suen had helped arrange the meeting, after asking Adelson the previous summer whether he might be interested in obtaining a gaming license in Macao. According to Suen, Adelson told him that such a license would be like getting "the brass ring," and described himself as "a man with a grand vision and a big pair of brass monkeys," who "would like to leave a visible footprint in history."

Macao had an enormous geographic advantage as a gaming destination. Gambling flourished in China until 1949, when the Communists took over and banned it as a capitalistic vice. But the Chinese remained avid gamblers, and gambling continued in Macao, a Portuguese colony an hour by ferry from Hong Kong. For nearly forty years, Stanley Ho, a controversial businessman, had enjoyed a gambling monopoly, but Macao was plagued by prostitution and violent crime, and dominated by triads, or Chinese mafia. In late 1999, soon after Macao was turned over to the People's Republic of China as a special administrative region, rumors began to circulate that Ho's monopoly was coming to an end; a limited number of new gaming licenses would be issued.

In the 2001 meeting, Qian, who was well briefed on Adelson, pointed out that during the Second World War China had accepted more than twenty thousand Jewish refugees in Shanghai. Adelson had been warned by Suen that Chinese officials find the subject of gaming distasteful, so he should not broach it. (As Suen wrote to Adelson, the Communists had banned gambling not only because it was against party principles but because "it has been a curse to my people way back in history like opium. It destroyed thousands of families from the bad old days to now.") Adelson spoke, instead, about his experience in the hotel and convention business. In 1979, he had launched a computer trade show, Comdex (for Computer Dealers Exposition), and over the next decade it became one of the largest in the world. In 1989, he had bought Las Vegas's old Sands Hotel, and built the biggest privately owned convention center in the country. And in 1997 he broke ground on the Venetian, to cater to a growing number of business travellers, among others. Qian told Adelson that he wanted to do much the same in Macao.

Then, unexpectedly, Qian introduced the subject of casinos. He asked how many hotel rooms Adelson might build in Macao. "I don't know," Adelson, who recalled the meeting in his trial testimony, responded. "How many you want me to build?" "Well, how many can you?" "I said, 'Well, that all depends how many people can come there.'" (China's 1.3 billion nationals need a special permit to go to Macao, so China controls the flow of visitors.) "He said, 'How many do you want?' And I said, 'Wow.' Of course, I didn't say, 'Wow,' right in front of him, but—I mean, when I left there I said to Bill . . . 'Did you hear what I heard? . . . Do you think there's a possibility . . . that he can open the gates to Macao?' "



In May, 2004, the first gamblers entered the Sands Macao. Its construction costs were two hundred and sixty-five million dollars, and Adelson made back his initial investment in a year. In December, 2004, Adelson took Las Vegas Sands public (according to *Forbes*, he owns sixty-nine per cent of the stock) and became a multibillionaire, overnight. The following year, Macao drew 10.5 million mainland Chinese visitors, a hundred and forty-seven per cent more than three years earlier—reflecting an easing of travel restrictions and an increase in the number of newly wealthy Chinese. By the end of 2006, Macao had become the top gambling center in the world, with gaming revenues exceeding $6.9 billion, a quarter of a billion dollars more than those on the Las Vegas Strip. In 2007, revenues climbed to $10.3 billion. That year, Adelson opened the $2.4-billion Venetian Macao—with canals and stripe-shirted gondoliers, as well as an extensive shopping mall and a five-hundred-and-forty-six-thousand-square-foot casino, which is the largest in the world. Since the Sands Macao opened, his personal wealth has multiplied more than fourteen times, and, according to the *Times*, in the two years after his company went public he earned roughly a million dollars an hour.

Now Las Vegas Sands plans to create "the Las Vegas Strip of Asia" on Cotai—an area of reclaimed land between two small islands, connected by bridges to Macao's peninsula—spending an additional ten billion dollars to build a dozen new hotels, with twenty thousand rooms, and adjacent casinos. The hotels will include some of the world's most famous brands, including the Four Seasons; all the casinos will be owned and operated by Las Vegas Sands. At a groundbreaking ceremony, in March, 2007, Adelson said that many members of Congress criticize China for its human-rights record, but he added that he liked the way the Chinese run their country. "People seem to be living a good life in China," he said. "Look at the incredible progress China has made. How can someone say they're doing the wrong thing?" He added that those who don't approve of the way China is governed need not go to the country. "I don't think the U.S. should be the policeman of the whole world," he said.

Suen has yet to profit from the role he played, and in 2004 he filed a lawsuit against Adelson and his company in Clark County District Court, in Las Vegas. He alleged, essentially, that Adelson and Las Vegas Sands had an agreement with him to help obtain the Macao license and then reneged after it was won. A letter signed by Weidner, shortly after the July, 2001, trip to China, details an arrangement whereby Suen would receive five million dollars as a "success fee upon opening of the resort" and an "ongoing 2% of the net profit to the resort." (Las Vegas Sands maintains that no formal contract existed and that Suen's role in procuring the license was negligible. "We're not deadbeats," Adelson said in testimony. "We owe people money, we pay them.")

On the morning of April 17, 2008, Adelson arrived at the Clark County courthouse in a Maybach limousine, accompanied by his wife and a bodyguard, and followed by a second vehicle, with additional bodyguards. Since 2001, Adelson has suffered from a condition known as peripheral neuropathy, which makes it difficult for him to walk. With his bodyguards in tow, he maneuvered an electric scooter along the courthouse corridor; when he arrived at the courtroom, he declared, "I brought my own chair," and, standing with the help of his wife, glared at a half-dozen reporters assembled there. Adelson's lawyer, Rusty Hardin—he recently represented Roger Clemens on Capitol Hill, defending him against accusations of steroid use—had argued that "confidential, private or trade secret information" in the case made "media access to the trial . . . impractical and prejudicial." That request had been denied. (Adelson occasionally grants an interview to the business press, if the story is narrowly focussed, but he will not coöperate if the aim is a more comprehensive portrait. As he told me, explaining his refusal of my repeated requests to interview him, he admires the way that Kirk Kerkorian, the ninety-one-year-old majority shareholder of Nevada's largest gaming company, MGM Mirage, conducts himself—"and Kirk never talks to the press." Adelson added, "Someday, I'll write my own book.")

Testimony in the Suen case proposes an answer to a subject of enduring conjecture in Las Vegas: how Las Vegas Sands triumphed over Strip rivals—such as MGM Mirage and, in a joint venture, Park Place Entertainment and Mandalay Bay Resort—that were also seeking a Macao license. At the time, Las Vegas Sands was smaller and financially weaker.

In July, 2001, after arriving in Beijing, Adelson and Weidner saw Olympic banners flying along the streets. They soon learned that the country was waiting to find out whether it would be selected as the site for the 2008 Summer Games. In addition to seeing the Vice-Premier, Adelson and Weidner met with the mayor of Beijing, who asked Adelson for help with a matter pending in the U.S. House of Representatives, which he believed was threatening China's chance to host the Olympics. (In the United States, China was widely perceived as the front-runner, and it is not clear that Congress's position would have had any impact on its chances.) Adelson said in court that he immediately made calls on his cell phone to Republican friends in Congress—including Tom DeLay, then the majority whip—who had received generous support from Adelson. DeLay told him that there was indeed a resolution pending about China and the Olympics. (Representative Tom Lantos, then the highest-ranking Democrat on the House International Relations Committee, had introduced a resolution opposing China's Olympic bid, saying, "China's abominable human rights record violates the spirit of the games and should disqualify Beijing from consideration.")

Weidner, in his deposition, described the relationship between DeLay—"a very religious guy"—and Adelson. "The link between Sheldon Adelson and right-wing religious Christians is the commonality of a strong Israel," he said. "So it just happens to be Sheldon has taken Tom DeLay to Israel and he's a friend." DeLay told Adelson that he supported the resolution because of his concern about China's record on human rights but added that he would be discussing the legislative agenda shortly. "Sheldon folds his cell phone up and says to the mayor of Beijing, 'I'm going to do my best,' " Weidner said. "About three hours later DeLay calls and he tells Sheldon, 'You're in luck,' " he continued, " 'because we've got a military-spending bill. . . . We're not going to be able to move the bill, so you tell your mayor that he can be assured that this bill will never see the light of day.' So Sheldon goes and he goes to the mayor and he says, 'The bill will never see the light of day, Mr. Mayor. Don't worry about it.' " Weidner also instructed the Sands's lobbyists in Washington, Patton Boggs, to suggest to the Chinese Embassy that Adelson and Las Vegas Sands were involved in the process that stalled the bill. (According to DeLay's spokeswoman, DeLay does not recall the conversation and had no role in blocking the bill. Representative Lantos died last February.)

In their trial testimony, both Adelson and Weidner portrayed the bill's demise as having resulted from the press of other legislation, rather than as a deliberate move by DeLay to help his benefactor. Six days after Adelson's conversation with DeLay, Lantos called for a vote on the resolution, saying, "I am asking the Speaker and the majority leader no longer to bottle up our legislation and to allow the representatives of the American people to speak their minds on this issue. . . . Mr. Speaker, allow us a vote." Three days later, the International Olympics Committee voted in China's favor.

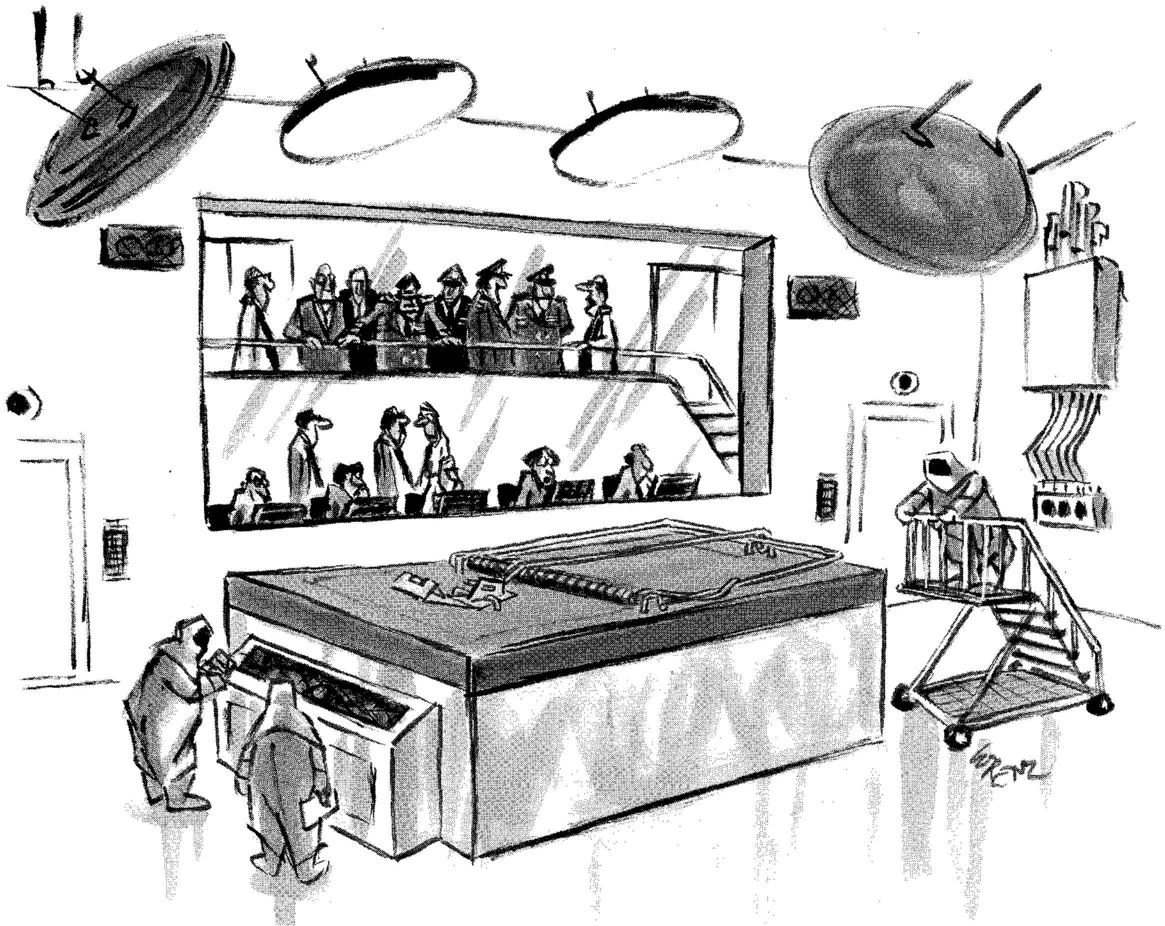
The only other American casino magnate to win a license in Macao in early 2002 was Steve Wynn, but he did not move as quickly as Adelson: the Wynn Macau opened two years after the Sands Macao. In 2004, however, MGM Mirage—which had lost out in the 2002 Macao bidding process—announced that it had obtained a license through a joint venture with Pansy Ho, Stanley Ho's daughter, and that it would build a casino in Macao. It would be a formidable rival to the Sands.

For MGM Mirage, the opportunity to enter Macao with Pansy Ho was at once alluring and treacherous. Stanley Ho has for many years fought allegations that organized-crime triads are involved in his Macao casinos. American regulators would have to be satisfied that Pansy Ho was independent of her father, and MGM would have to institute certain protections in the joint-venture agreement. MGM executives concluded that these goals were challenging but doable. Several months after MGM's announcement of the deal with Pansy Ho, an adviser to MGM Mirage told me, they began hearing rumors that a report was being circulated, accusing Stanley Ho and his daughter of having criminal ties, among other allegations, and that it had been commissioned by Las Vegas Sands. Around this time, the adviser continued, Adelson visited Kerkorian in Los Angeles and told him that he would have problems with Pansy Ho and suggested that MGM Mirage become partners with Las Vegas Sands instead. Kerkorian declined, the adviser said. In 2007, an article in the Newark *Star-Ledger* revealed that a report that had circulated among journalists, regulators, and government officials around the world about Pansy Ho and her father had been commissioned by Las Vegas Sands. When the story broke, Adelson's spokesman said that the company executives had no idea how copies of the report were leaked, and noted that the report had been commissioned to learn more about the Hos. "We're in the midst of a twelve-billion development in Macao," the spokesman said. "Certainly there's been a lot of rumor and speculation about the Ho family and its business activities. . . . It was only prudent for us to get the lay of the land."

When I asked MGM Mirage's chairman and chief executive officer, J. Terence Lanni, about Adelson's visit to Kerkorian, he said that Adelson had not offered a true partnership. "But we wouldn't have done it even if there were a possibility of a partnership, because they're not good partnership material," he said.

After Kerkorian's refusal, Las Vegas Sands executives flew to Mississippi to see the governor, Haley Barbour. "Haley called, and he said that when he heard these Las Vegas Sands executives were coming to see him he was excited," Lanni, who has been a friend of Barbour's since the nineties, when Barbour chaired the Republican National Committee, recalled. "He thought they wanted to make a major investment in Mississippi." After the executives arrived, they discussed the report with Barbour, and said that the Mississippi Gaming Commission should not approve the application from MGM Mirage to enter into gaming in Macao. (Because MGM Mirage has resort casinos in Mississippi, state regulators must grant approval of the gaming company's foreign operations.) "Haley said, 'I realized after a few minutes that those guys don't like competition,' " Lanni continued. (Barbour's office confirmed the meeting but declined to discuss the conversation. Adelson declined to comment on this, as he did on all aspects of the piece.) The Mississippi Gaming Commission waived its requirement to approve the deal, allowing MGM to go forward in Macao.

"Sheldon is a very determined person," Lanni said. "When he wants some-



"This is just a prototype, of course, but I can say that our previous tests on mice were extremely encouraging."

thing, it's a fixation, it's 24/7. What he did here was his right to do," Lanni continued, adding, "I wouldn't do it."

PROPOFOL

Moly, mandragora, milk of oblivion:
I said to Doctor Day, "You bring on night."
"But then," he said, "I bring day back again,"
and smiled; except his smile was thin and slight.

I said to him, "Sleep and Death were brothers,
you know. They carry off great Troy's Sarpedon
in Euphronios' famous calyx-krater"—
babbling. He said, "I am a singleton."

I said to him, "The Romans would have called you
Somnus, the Greeks Hypnos or Morpheus"
(but Doctor Day looked blank), anything to
forestall the wasp (Classics not his thing, I guess)

alighting on the back of my right hand.
He said to me, "Tell me why you are here."
I said, "To lose a page, I understand,
out of the Book of Life." A traveller

approached the citadel even while I was speaking,
seven seconds from my brain: then it was snuff.
Pornokrates, naked in her black stocking,
led one more pig on a leash to the trough.

—*Karl Kirchwey*

A CORNED-BEEF SOIRÉE

"In my sixty-three years in business, in over fifty different businesses, I've broken the mold and changed the status quo," Adelson said one evening in late March to about three hundred dinner guests, gathered in a lavish ballroom at the Venetian in Las Vegas to see him and his wife presented with an award for corporate citizenship by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. (The singer Wayne Newton was also honored.) Adelson, whose countenance often suggests that he is spoiling for a fight, takes pride in being an outsider, who has suffered rejection and ridicule but has avenged every slight, many times over. Vindication is sweet, if never quite sufficient. As he recently commented during a conference call with stock analysts, "They always derided, they always demonized our convention strategy, and look who's laughing last."

Adelson's father, a Lithuanian immigrant, was a cabdriver in Boston, and his mother ran a knitting shop from home, in a tenement in Dorchester. Sheldon, his three siblings, and their parents all slept in one room. He and other Jewish boys in the neighborhood were beaten up by Irish youths. When he was twelve, he borrowed two hundred dollars from an uncle to purchase the right to sell newspapers on prime corners. At sixteen, he started a candy-vending-machine operation. He attended a trade school to become a court reporter, and when he joined the Army, three and a half years out of high school, that was his assignment. He told the audience at the Venetian that it was then that his commitment to helping others crystallized. "I know that a lot of people think that guys like me succeed by stepping on the broken backs of employees and other people," Adelson said, "but they don't understand that we, too, have philosophies and ideals that we adhere to very scrupulously."

He had an epiphany of sorts when he was in the Army. He said that in the waning days of the McCarthy era there were a number of appeals-board hearings of scientists who had had their clearances revoked, and he took down their testimony. "The scientists had been invited to a 'soirée,' " he continued, his voice tinged with sarcasm. "You know, these wine-and-celery affairs, wine-and-cheese affairs—and me, I wanted hot dogs and hamburgers and pastrami sandwiches." The crowd chuckled appreciatively. "Little did they know that these were Communist-infiltrated cells. . . . But every one of them had the same story," he said. "They went to soirées, and the conversation consisted of why they were here on earth. And I said to myself, 'These guys are . . . the greatest scientists in history, and they're asking themselves, Why are they here on earth? . . . This is the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of. There have been countless billions of people that have lived since the Neanderthal man, and not one person has ever found out why they're here on earth, with any degree of certainty—don't they know that?' "

Still, he tried to put himself in their place. He imagined himself at a "corned-beef soirée," trying to figure out why he was here on earth. First, he thought it was to feel good, but then he decided that that was too selfish. What about helping others? "If I make other people feel good, I feel good!" He added, "I literally, mentally, went like"—he paused, brushing his hands together in a dismissive gesture—"it's over with! I don't have to think about that issue ever again in my life."

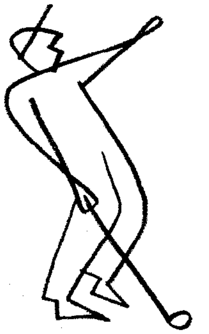
After Adelson came out of the Army, he and his brother Lenny packaged toiletries to be distributed by hotels and started a business called De-Ice-It, which sold a chemical spray to help clear frozen windshields. Adelson became a mortgage broker; he sold ads for financial trade publications and advised companies looking for financing; he invested in real estate, and ran a tour business. ("My father used to say . . . 'Sheldon, you're like that horse stuff—you're all over the place,'" Adelson told investors at a recent conference.) Some of his ventures were successful—he has said that in his mid-thirties he had a net worth of about five million dollars—but he lost a fortune twice. Jason Chudnofsky, a business investor, recalled a meeting, in the mid-eighties, at the kitchen table in Adelson's home in a Boston suburb, where he was living with his first wife, Sandra. "I remember sitting with him," Chudnofsky said. "He had a T-shirt on and was eating Chinese food out of a carton. He said, 'Work with me, Jason, and we're going to be dealing with ministers!' I said, 'What church?' He said, 'No, not church! Ministers of countries!' I was skeptical, knowing his past history." Chudnofsky continued, "Sheldon had lost a lot of money."

Comdex broke the cycle of success and failure in Adelson's business career. In 1979, noting the growing personal-computer business, he launched an independent trade show in Las Vegas, to bring together the industry. Comdex was owned by what later became known as the Interface Group, a company that produced conferences and expositions around the world. Chudnofsky, who became the president and C.O.O. of Interface in 1988, concluded that Adelson had not only an enormous appetite for risk and a keen intellect but also the instincts of a street fighter—which gave him an edge over many of his more educated peers. He did not shy away from courtroom battles. "Since he was a young businessman, Sheldon's attitude has been: Spend millions on defense and never settle," Chudnofsky said. Adelson thought big. He would demand of his executives, "Why scratch like a chicken when you can roar like a lion?" He was a micromanager before the word had become a cliché. And he was not a boss for the fainthearted. Once, when a secretary made a couple of errors in a letter she was typing, Adelson sat down and showed her how it should be done—at ninety words a minute. Another Interface executive, Dave Kaminer, said, "There were people who feared him. They would just shudder when Sheldon walked through."

In the late nineteen-eighties, one of his closest friends from childhood, Alan Rice, was the show director for a Las Vegas festival, Cinetex, that was organized by Interface in collaboration with the American Film Institute. Rice taped Adelson at one meeting when he was issuing orders. "About a month later, Sheldon came back and said, 'You guys have done this all wrong, you didn't follow my directions!'" Chudnofsky recalled. "Alan Rice said, 'Stop for a second, Shel—I'm going to play a tape of the meeting for you.' And Sheldon said the following: 'What are you guys, crazy? Who are you gonna believe, me or the tape?'" (Rice declined to comment on the incident.)

During this period, Adelson remarked to Kaminer that he had finally realized what he was: an entrepreneur. "He said that before he heard the word he'd always thought he was a floater with a short attention span," Kaminer recalled. Adelson spotted a new opportunity: Las Vegas. The city had focussed on high rollers and entertainment, but, Adelson thought, why not lure more business travellers with conventions and corporate meetings, and fill the hotels on weekdays? In 1989, Adelson bought the old Sands Hotel from Kerkorian for a hundred and twenty-eight million dollars, and established a new company, Las Vegas Sands. He built the country's largest exhibition center next to the hotel. The local establishment mocked him, but as conventions flocked to Las Vegas he was proved right.

Adelson, who separated from Sandra in 1988, met Miriam Ochshorn on a blind date the following year. Miriam, an Israeli internist, was at Rockefeller University as a guest investigator on an exchange program, and was living with her two young daughters in a New York apartment. Miriam's specialty was the treatment of drug addiction. Sandra Adelson had three children, whom Sheldon had adopted when they were young. Their two sons, Mitchell and Gary, both had substance-abuse problems, and during the eighties Adelson had helped to establish drug-treatment centers. Adelson was still living in Boston, but he and Miriam began spending a great deal of time in Las Vegas.



In mid-November, 1993, during the annual Las Vegas Comdex show, Adelson met with Masayoshi Son, a software distributor from Japan who had made his first million while still an undergraduate student, at the University of California at Berkeley, and had started a company, SoftBank, in 1981, when he was twenty-four. (Today, Son is the fifth-richest man in Japan, according to *Forbes*.) Son told Adelson that he was interested in acquiring Comdex but did not have the money; Adelson told him to come back when he did. The following year, the two met again; Adelson later said that he thought they were meeting to continue a discussion Son had had with one of Adelson's partners about Interface's interest in another deal—but, to his surprise, Son told him he wanted to discuss the possibility of buying Comdex, and he would name a price after reviewing the company's financials.

At the time, Adelson had three partners in Interface, and they were eager to sell, having entertained offers for several years. One of the partners, Irwin Chafetz, had a mantra: "Nothing is forever." Now, as an incentive to persuade Adelson to sell, they agreed to relinquish their interests in Las Vegas Sands. At a meeting in mid-January, 1995, Son made an offer, and the next month Comdex was sold to SoftBank for more than eight hundred million dollars. Adelson, with a controlling stake in the company, reportedly earned five hundred and ten million dollars from the sale.

Shortly before the eventful meeting between Son and Adelson in November, 1994, Adelson had made a proposal to his three adult children. In 1989, he had arranged for each of them—Mitchell, Gary, and his daughter, Shelley—to receive 2,941.24 shares of stock in Interface, in trusts; now he broached the possibility of buying the shares back. In a discussion with Mitchell on October 20, 1994, Adelson alluded to the risks of stockownership; he also said that he had long been trying to sell Interface but had not received any appropriate offers, and he did not foresee selling the company in the near future. Adelson believed that his sons could not support themselves or their families (he had been supporting them, either directly or by furnishing assets that provided their support), and that the transaction would assure them a steady stream of income and a later lump sum. Adelson asked Mitchell to convey the proposal to Gary and Shelley. On November 10th—days before the meeting in which Son told Adelson that he wanted to buy Comdex—the three children signed documents agreeing to sell their shares to their father, at a price based in part on a valuation of the entire company of four hundred and thirty million dollars, half of what it sold for several months later. The children received just under $5.3 million for their shares from Adelson.

In September, 1997, Adelson's sons sued their father, alleging that he had defrauded them by not divulging material information, in order to induce them to sell their stock for less than its fair value. (Adelson's daughter, who was married to a company executive, did not join the suit.) In April, 2001, the sons lost in a trial in Massachusetts Superior Court. In the Findings of Fact, Associate Justice Hiller B. Zobel wrote, "The evidence during the 14-day trial depicted, like something from the playwright Arthur Miller, a harsh, demanding, unfeeling, successful businessman frustrated in his inability to actuate his self-indulgent, substance-abusing, overpampered, and (as he believes) ungrateful sons." In the Conclusions of Law, the judge wrote, "Defendant Adelson, although perhaps lacking paternal kindliness and, indeed, cordiality generally, did not mislead, cheat, or defraud Plaintiffs." In a separate memorandum, Justice Zobel denied a motion that Adelson had made to tax his sons with deposition costs. Mitchell, who pursued the case in appellate court, lost there, too, in 2004. (In September, 2005, Mitchell, who was married and had three sons, died unexpectedly at the age of forty-eight. Miriam Adelson recently told the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* that he died of a drug overdose.)

In 1996, Adelson demolished the old Sands hotel and began building the Venetian. Instead of small rooms with no amenities and all-you-can-eat buffets, it would have four thousand rooms, of seven hundred square feet each, with minibars, fax machines, and telephones equipped for conference calls. It would offer world-class restaurants, a shopping mall with luxury boutiques, and the world's largest casino. Since Adelson was building this mega-resort at a time when Las Vegas was suffering from a glut of rooms and many operators were cutting prices, his competitors felt threatened.

Adelson, typically, was consumed with things large and small: the precise replication of the Campanile di San Marco and the Bridge of Sighs, the tassels on the curtains, the question of whether it was cheaper to rent or buy cranes (he bought), the color of the canals (he ordered them drained and their surface repainted, for a more perfect blue). "He would reëngineer everything every day," Ken Moelis, an investment banker who has known Adelson since the eighties, said. Moelis added that this approach reflected Adelson's attitude toward most things in business and in life. "It's taking nothing for granted. 'Just because it's been done this way, so what?' He's just a grinder on everything. He chops up problems and goes back to square one. If you say, 'Let's start by saying there are fifty people out there,' he says, 'Why? Why do you say fifty?'" After a pause, Moelis added, "But I have to say—he's a great entrepreneur." In May, 1999, when the Las Vegas Venetian opened, Adelson's rivals enjoyed the spectacle. Many shops and restaurant spaces were still under construction, and building inspectors hadn't approved all of the hotel rooms. Adelson and his contractors were in court, there were hundreds of millions of dollars of liens on the hotel, and picketers were demonstrating on the Las Vegas Strip.

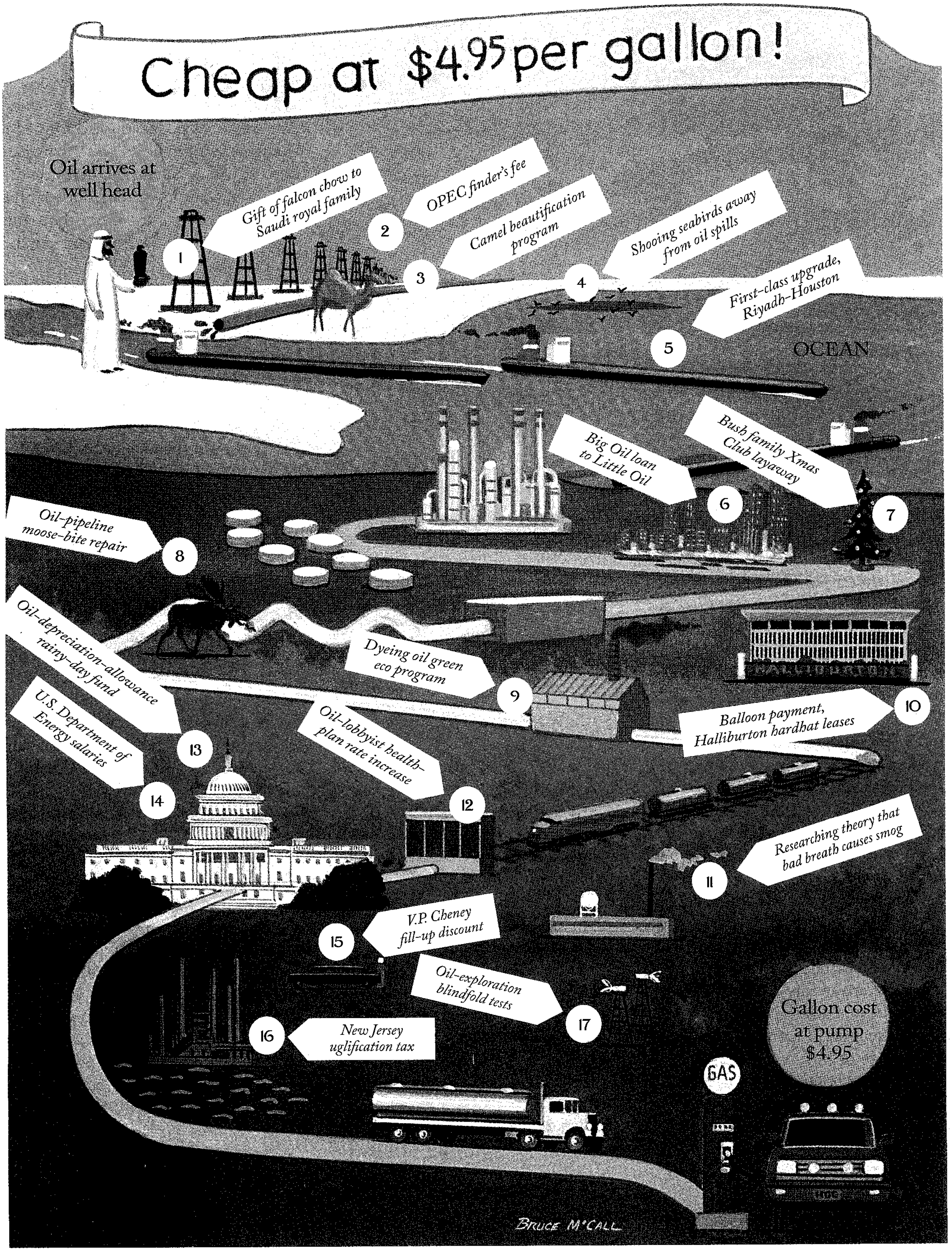
Like all major Las Vegas hotel casinos, the Sands was a union hotel when Adelson bought it, but the Venetian was non-union. This sparked a singularly bitter war with the Culinary Union, which had for many years maintained good relations with most hotels on the Strip. (Adelson has said that the benefits he gives his employees are superior to union benefits.) After a rally in which a thousand union supporters picketed in front of the Venetian, Adelson tried to have them removed by the police, and when that failed he went to court, arguing that the sidewalks outside the Venetian were private property, and not subject to the First Amendment. The Venetian lost in the district court and the appellate court, and in 2002 the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case.

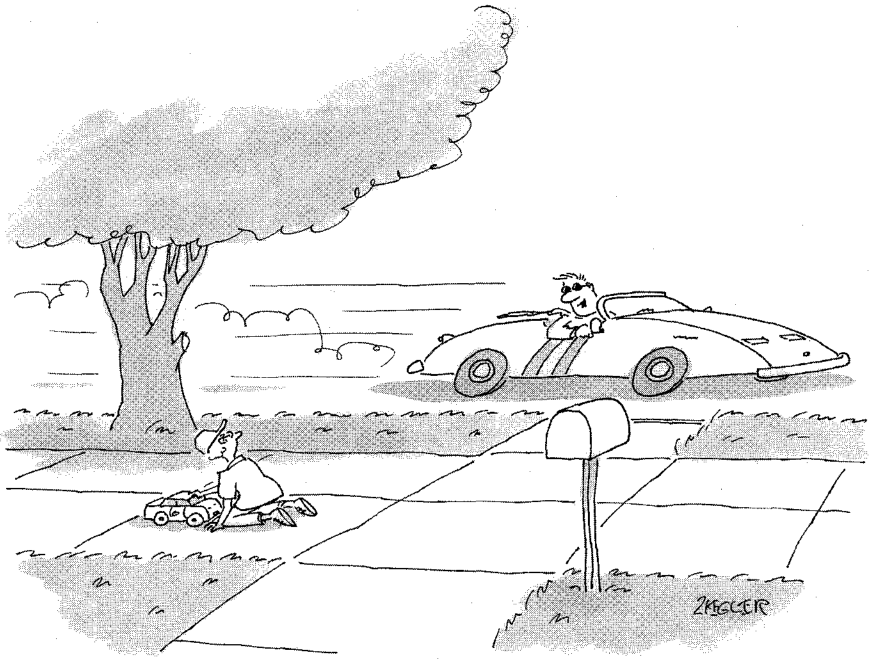
When Adelson learned that the Denver-based National Jewish Medical and Research Center was planning to host an event in Las Vegas in March, 1998, to honor John Wilhelm, the head of the Culinary Union at the time, he called the president of the hospital to protest. The event went on as planned, and, according to the Las Vegas *Review-Journal*, one participant, the Nevada senator Richard Bryan, referred to the man "who is dining alone tonight." In 1999, Las Vegas's Temple Beth Sholom was holding a dinner to fête the new mayor of Las Vegas, Oscar Goodman. Adelson, a member of Beth Sholom, had recently pledged two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to the temple's new-building fund. The dinner was to be held at the Venetian, but Mayor Goodman said that he would not cross the picket line, and synagogue officials decided to go elsewhere. Adelson excoriated Beth Sholom's rabbi, Felipe Goodman. Rabbi Goodman told the *Review-Journal* that Adelson had been "so verbally abusive. I was very upset because no one had ever talked to me like he talked to me." After the dinner took place at the Four Seasons, Adelson withdrew his pledge to Beth Sholom. He gave large sums to the local Chabad, a branch of the Hasidic Chabad-Lubavitchers, for the construction of a new center.

Adelson, like other members of his family, had been a Democrat. But, as his wealth grew, he began to favor tax-averse Republican economic policies. He argued to an associate recently, "Why is it fair that I should be paying a higher percentage of taxes than anyone else?" Three years ago, at an event in Washington, D.C., celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Republican Jewish Coalition, Adelson, who was being honored that evening, told the audience about the time he had spent with William Bush, the brother of George H. W. Bush, during the 1988 election. "He explained to me what Republicanism was all about . . . so I got to learn about it and I switched immediately!" Adelson said. But it was only after he went to war against the union that he became so partisan. He began donating hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Republican National State Election Committee.

Testifying before the Nevada state ethics commission in 1998, Shelley Berkley, who is now a Democratic congresswoman for Nevada, and who had worked for Adelson in the nineties as his vice-president of legal and governmental affairs, said that Adelson had told her that "old Democrats were with the union and he wanted to break the back of the union, consequently he had to break the back of the Democrats." Adelson fired Berkley in 1997, just months before she planned to begin a run for her first term in Congress. In a September, 1998, letter to the *Review-Journal*, Adelson wrote, "She vi-

SKETCHBOOK BY BRUCE McCALL


Cheap at $4.95 per gallon!
Oil arrives at well head
1
Gift of falcon chow to Saudi royal family
2
OPEC finder's fee
3
Camel beautification program
4
Shooing seabirds away from oil spills
5
First-class upgrade, Riyadh–Houston
OCEAN
6
Big Oil loan to Little Oil
7
Bush family Xmas Club layaway
8
Oil-pipeline moose-bite repair
9
Dyeing oil green eco program
HALLIBURTON
10
Balloon payment, Halliburton hardhat leases
11
Researching theory that bad breath causes smog
12
Oil-lobbyist health-plan rate increase
13
Oil-depreciation-allowance rainy-day fund
14
U.S. Department of Energy salaries
15
V.P. Cheney fill-up discount
16
New Jersey uglification tax
17
Oil-exploration blindfold tests
GAS
Gallon cost at pump $4.95
BRUCE McCALL



"Hey, kid, how's this for a bitchin' set of wheels?"

• •

olated attorney/client privilege and after two warnings, I decided to fire her. . . . Shelley Berkley attacks me in order to draw attention away from her own ethical lapses." Berkley published a letter in the paper a week later, in response, and she explained her firing differently. "My relationship with him began to sour the moment I urged him to hold jobs open at the Venetian for former Sands workers. The more I encouraged cooperation with the workers, the more I incurred Mr. Adelson's wrath," Berkley wrote. "Over time, I observed Mr. Adelson plot vendettas against anyone whom he believed stood in his way. However minuscule the perceived affront, he was certain to go ballistic, using his money and position to bully any 'opponent'—great or small—into submission. . . . He has funneled hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Republican Party to support his handpicked candidate by attacking me on TV."

She went on, "I have unique personal knowledge of how Mr. Adelson seeks to dominate politics and public policy through the raw power of money. Shortly before I was fired from the Sands by Mr. Adelson in 1997, he made me an offer. It was a bizarre proposition, but it was simple and it was direct. He told me if I would switch from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party he would provide all the campaign funding I would need to run for Congress." Berkley won her first race by only three percentage points. In 2006, she won a fifth term with sixty-five per cent of the vote, and today is a popular representative with a seemingly safe district; but Adelson has continued to try to defeat her.

HIS FATHER'S SHOES

However much influence Adelson's wealth has brought him in this country in the last few years, it is modest compared with his sway in Israel. Adelson has long been devoted to the Jewish state. He has often recounted how his father yearned to set foot in Israel but was too poor to travel there, and then, later, too ill to go; after his father died, Adelson travelled to Israel and wore his father's shoes when he disembarked from the plane. With his marriage to Miriam, in 1991, his focus on Israel intensified. For their wedding, Adelson took more than a hundred and fifty guests to Israel on a private plane; they stayed in the King David Hotel, in Jerusalem, and attended a reception in the Knesset's Chagall State Hall, where Chagall tapestries hang. Miriam and Sheldon have two sons—Adam, born in 1997, and Matan, in 1999. Miriam has continued her work treating drug addicts, and she and Sheldon have founded drug-treatment clinics in Israel as well as in the U.S. (Sheldon often refers to her as his "angel-wife," alluding to her commitment to helping others.)

According to two people who know Adelson well, Miriam influenced his political views on Israel, which have become more conservative. By the mid-nineties, Adelson and Netanyahu had formed a close relationship; in Israel's 1996 election, in which Netanyahu defeated the Labor candidate for Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, by a mere thirty thousand votes, Adelson was widely reported to be a key backer.

Adelson began spending a great deal of time in Israel. He invested in high-tech companies, and he lobbied for the legalization of gaming, declaring his desire to build a casino in Eilat, at Israel's southern tip, which he visualized as "Vegas with water." He also considered building a casino on an island in the Jordan River. Israel's Ambassador to Jordan at the time, Oded Eran, remembered receiving a call from Prime Minister Netanyahu, who said that, when Adelson was in Amman, Eran should take him to see King Hussein. Adelson wanted to propose his gaming initiative to the King. "Adelson got in my car and said, 'Where did you get this? I need one,'" Eran recalled. "I had an armored car, made by BMW, that cost a half million dollars, and had windows so thick that it was an exercise for your arms to close the door." He asked Adelson why he needed one; Adelson replied that he was in the casino business.

Adelson's dreams of gaming in Israel have not yet been realized—Orthodox Jews, especially, are strongly opposed to gambling—but his current ambitions go far beyond casinos. He has set off a fight among newspapers in Israel which is unprecedented; never before has someone with virtually unlimited means tried to use a newspaper to make a politician Prime Minister. Israel has three major Hebrew-language morning newspapers, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, *Ha'aretz*, and *Ma'ariv*. In 2006, Adelson tried to buy *Ma'ariv*, but his negotiations with its chairman, Ofer Nimrodi, collapsed. That year, Adelson started a free daily with an Israeli partner; he and his partner ended up in court, and he withdrew from the venture. In March, 2007, Adelson began a new round of talks to buy *Ma'ariv*, but these negotiations, too, broke down. After all these false starts, last August, Adelson launched *Israel Hayom*, or *Israel Today*, a free daily. It was reported that he was planning to invest a hundred and eighty million dollars.

Michael Steinhardt is a former hedge-fund manager and the co-founding chairman of Taglit-Birthright Israel, a program, established in 1999, that pays for Jewish youths to go to Israel each year. He is friendly with Adelson, who is a fellow-contributor to Birthright. "These things are not done to make money," Steinhardt said of Adelson's new media initiatives. "They're done because Sheldon's an ideologue—he really cares about things that are of the spirit and not of the pocketbook."

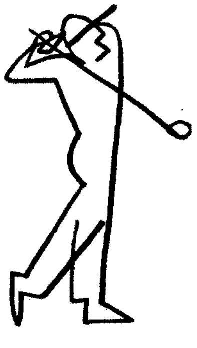
In the Israeli media world, *Israel Hayom* is referred to as *Bibi-ton*, because many believe that it serves as a mouthpiece for Netanyahu, whose nickname is Bibi, and who has long received extraordinarily negative press coverage in Israel. *Israel Hayom* journalists are reportedly under strict orders not to speak publicly about their paper. "What their spokespeople say is, there is a need for more balanced journalism in Israel, like what Fox News says in the U.S.," one academic told me. "But, yes, the paper's objective is to make Bibi Netanyahu Prime Minister," he went on, stressing that that goal was not quixotic. "In Israel, newspapers have a large impact on the public mind."

The editor of *Israel Hayom*, Amos Regev, is a Netanyahu supporter, and he recruited several well-regarded journalists. One was Dan Margalit, formerly of *Ma'ariv*. Margalit was for many years one of Olmert's closest friends but broke with him over his handling of the 2006 Lebanon war. Well before the current corruption investigation of Olmert, *Israel Hayom* was filled with anti-Olmert articles. Its specialty is vitriolic headlines, such as "THE ASS-COVERING OF THE GOVERNMENT." (*Israel Hayom* would not comment for this article.)

Last January, Nahum Barnea—a political columnist for *Yedioth Ahronoth*, who is one of Israel's preëminent journalists—wrote about Adelson in his media column, The Seventh Eye. Adelson, he said, "is a great admirer of Israel, and knows better than any Israeli what is best for this country. When it comes to his views on the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict, he is a right-wing extremist, who is convinced that Israel is governed by a corrupt, unpatriotic, and illegitimate government. . . . Billionaires with a political agenda spell trouble in any kind of media outlet, but in Israel—where the political system decides on matters of existential importance—all the more so." Barnea noted that the publishers of *Ha'aretz*, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, and *Ma'ariv* exert influence over the general political outlook of their respective papers, but that many articles in each paper represent a different point of view. "Adelson's project, on the other hand, publishes only what Adelson himself would want to read—if he could read Hebrew, that is," Barnea wrote. "The same agenda, day in, day out, relentlessly. This is the stuff propaganda is made of, not journalism."

In early January, Yoram Bonen, a Tel Aviv lawyer, wrote a letter on behalf of *Israel Hayom* to Prime Minister Olmert. Bonen complained that *Israel Hayom* reporters were being discriminated against in various ways by Olmert's office. Olmert's media adviser, Yaakov Galanti, labelled the claims "ridiculous." In a written response, he also said that even the definition of *Israel Hayom* as a newspaper was wrong; the phrase "printed material" would be more suitable.

Galanti wrote, "The Prime Minister has, on more than one opportunity, had occasion to meet with the publisher of this material who, for some reason, did not conceal his political views or the political aims of his printed material—not to mention the fact that this same publisher meddles in the Israeli political scene, meeting with coalition members and trying to persuade them to quit the [government]." In late December, it was reported in the Israeli press that Adelson had met with two ministers in Olmert's coalition government—Avigdor Liberman, of the right-wing Israel Beytenu Party, and Eli Yishai, of the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party—to try to persuade them to leave the coalition, a move that would likely bring down the Olmert government. In February, pamphlets were delivered to the synagogues attended by Shas voters throughout Israel, urging them to tell Yishai to leave the government. A spokesman for Shas said that the pamphlets were distributed by One Jerusalem, which is funded in part by Adelson. (One Jerusalem denies involvement.) Liberman left the government in January. He said that he did not discuss his departure with Adelson and that he left following Annapolis, "when the government began negotiating with the Palestinians regarding core issues." Yishai remains, though he threatens to walk out if Olmert negotiates with the Palestinians about Jerusalem.



Israel Hayom seems to be thriving. A survey published in late January showed that it was gaining readers at the expense of paid-for publications. It is seeking to challenge *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Israel's largest daily, which calls itself "the paper of the country," both by competing directly and by forming an alliance with *Ha'aretz*, using *Ha'aretz's* printing and distribution systems. In April, the Israeli press reported that Adelson was once again negotiating with Nimrodi to buy *Ma'ariv*. Someone close to the Mozes family, which has owned *Yedioth* since Israel's independence, suggested that, if Adelson succeeds in buying *Ma'ariv*, *Yedioth* might have to go public, in order to have sufficient funds to compete against Adelson.

Adelson is also funding, with a $4.5-million grant, a think tank, the Adelson Institute for Strategic Studies, at the right-leaning Shalem Center, in Jerusalem. Netanyahu allies are on its staff. Natan Sharansky, the chairman of One Jerusalem, also chairs the Adelson Institute. Sharansky helped organize a "Democracy and Security" conference last June, in Prague, which was attended by President Bush. Iran was a major topic of discussion. A month after the Prague conference, Adelson attended a fund-raising event at the C.A.A. talent agency, in Los Angeles, for Steven Emerson, an investigative journalist specializing in Islamic extremism and terrorism, who was showing a ten-minute trailer for a film he wanted to make. Emerson introduced Sheldon and Miriam to the overflow crowd in C.A.A.'s two-hundred-seat theatre, saying that they were his generous supporters. After Emerson's presentation, Pooya Dayanim, a Jewish-Iranian democracy activist based in Los Angeles, chatted with Adelson. Recalling their conversation, Dayanim observed that Adelson was dismissive of Reza Pahlevi, the son of the former Shah, who had participated in the Prague conference, because, Adelson said, "he doesn't want to attack Iran." According to Dayanim, Adelson referred to another Iranian dissident at the conference, Amir Abbas Fakhravar, whom he said he would like to support, saying, "I like Fakhravar because he says that, if we attack, the Iranian people will be ecstatic." Dayanim said that when he disputed that assumption Adelson responded, "I really don't care what happens to Iran. I am for Israel."

If Adelson were spending money in Israel only to advance his ideological aims, he might encounter greater resistance from those who think differently. But his philanthropy in the last couple of years—and the promise of much more to come—seems to have given him stature, and a kind of immunity. His close friend Arthur Marshall, a Las Vegas banker, assured me that, as a result of Adelson's philanthropy, "he may be bigger than the Rothschilds." In 2006, Sheldon and Miriam donated twenty-five million dollars to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial, the largest donation from a private donor in its history. That year, an article in *Ha'aretz* stated that Adelson was creating a foundation that would give more than two hundred million dollars annually to Jewish causes. Recently, a person close to the foundation said, "There is no commitment that it will be two hundred million dollars a year—they will go project by project. And there is no real mission—there are hundreds of thousands of applicants, and the foundation will go through those applications." Still, the potential for mammoth grant-making engenders a great deal of good will.

Sheldon and Miriam Adelson have also donated thirty million dollars a year, for the last two years, to Taglit-Birthright Israel. Before Adelson decided to make his Birthright gift, Shimshon Shoshani, the organization's C.E.O., recalled, "He looked at every detail of the program—flight schedules, contracts, everything." Like many prospective donors, Adelson was asked to make his gift over a number of years, but he chose instead to go year by year. He became Birthright's single largest donor. In 2008, he provided about a third of its eighty-six-million-dollar annual budget. Birthright executives are hoping that he will donate thirty million dollars or more for 2009—but they are still waiting to hear his decision. There are hotel reservations to be made and plane tickets to be purchased for Birthright participants. "With Sheldon's approach—and with his being the biggest donor—you literally know you have the money just in time to start spending it," someone closely involved with Birthright said.

During the celebration of Israel's sixtieth birthday, in mid-May, Shimon Peres wanted to hold a conference that would be attended by leaders from around the world. "I know they had difficulties raising the money," a former Israeli official told me. "And time was short. So they realized they should talk to Sheldon." Adelson agreed to provide three million dollars; after that, conference organizers were able to raise the rest. That Adelson was supporting an event led by Peres—the man he had helped Netanyahu defeat in the momentous 1996 election—made him appear more ecumenical. He and Miriam were named honorary conference chairs, and a photograph of them was featured in the program for the Peres event, along with a message from them. Throughout the conference, Adelson was treated with deference, reflected in his place in the receiving line, his addressing the conference, and his seat next to President Peres. (He was also one seat away from Prime Minister Olmert; they shook hands but did not exchange a word.) At a formal dinner attended by more than a hundred senior officials of various Israeli and Jewish organizations, guests were offered the opportunity to tell Peres what they considered the biggest challenge facing the Jewish people. Adelson, according to *Ha'aretz*, declared, "I think Jews should have lots of sex. That is the solution to our demographic problem."

After Adelson addressed the conference, Nahum Barnea wrote in his column in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, "I saw a gambling tycoon from Las Vegas who bought my country's birthday with three million dollars. I thought with sorrow: Is the country worth so very little? Were the champagne, wine and sushi that were given out for free in the lobby—breaking convention for such events—worth the humiliation?" Barnea went on:

> Adelson is a Jew who loves Israel. Like some other Jews who live at a safe distance from here, his love is great, passionate, smothering. It is important to him that he influences the policies, decisions, and compositions of the Israeli governments. He is not alone in this, either; even back in the days of Baron Rothschild, wealthy Jews from the Diaspora felt that this country lay in their pocket, alongside their wallet. Regrettably, in the latest generation, we are being led by politicians who look at these millionaires with calf's eyes.

In Israel, where political, academic, and business leaders tend to be outspoken, there is a striking reticence at the mention of Sheldon Adelson. Even people who are diametrically opposed to his politics refuse to be interviewed. "There is a discernible amount of self-censorship going on," the liberal Israeli-American writer Bernard Avishai said. "There is no ideological justification for what Sheldon is doing among the Israeli intelligentsia—and a revulsion at an American weighing in so heavily on Israeli politics, in such a crude, reactionary way. But they won't speak."

THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON

Lately, Adelson's interest in newspapers seems to have moved beyond Israel. He approached the Chicago-based real-estate magnate Sam Zell about a possible partnership in the Tribune Company, which Zell acquired last December. Zell politely declined. Several sources say that Adelson is interested in buying the Las Vegas *Review-Journal*. (The Stephens family, which owns the paper, said that he has not made an offer.)

Adelson would hardly be the first businessman to want to expand his political influence in this country by owning a newspaper. What makes his case seem more anomalous is the fact that in recent years Adelson's relationship with the press has been distinguished mainly by a marked readiness to sue. In 2005, the London *Daily Mail* published an article that described Adelson as, among other things, "the ruthless casino baron who rules Las Vegas." Adelson sued. Last March, the *Daily Mail* apologized to Adelson for serious errors in the piece, and Adelson won legal costs and substantial damages. (He donated the damages to a hospital.)

The outcome of the lawsuits he has

filed in this country has been more mixed. In a column in April, 2006, the business editor of the Las Vegas *Sun*, Jeff Simpson, referring to a bid by Las Vegas Sands to build a project in Singapore, estimated the company's odds of winning at 8 to 1. Simpson wrote, "The company's lawsuit-happy history and sorry Nevada regulatory record won't help," and referred to "a fine and regulatory costs after casino bosses rigged a 2002 contest" and "a laundry list of other serious violations." Las Vegas Sands sued the *Sun*, its publisher, Barbara Greenspun, and Simpson, claiming that the company had been libelled. The court dismissed the case. Las Vegas Sands amended its complaint; this, too, was dismissed.

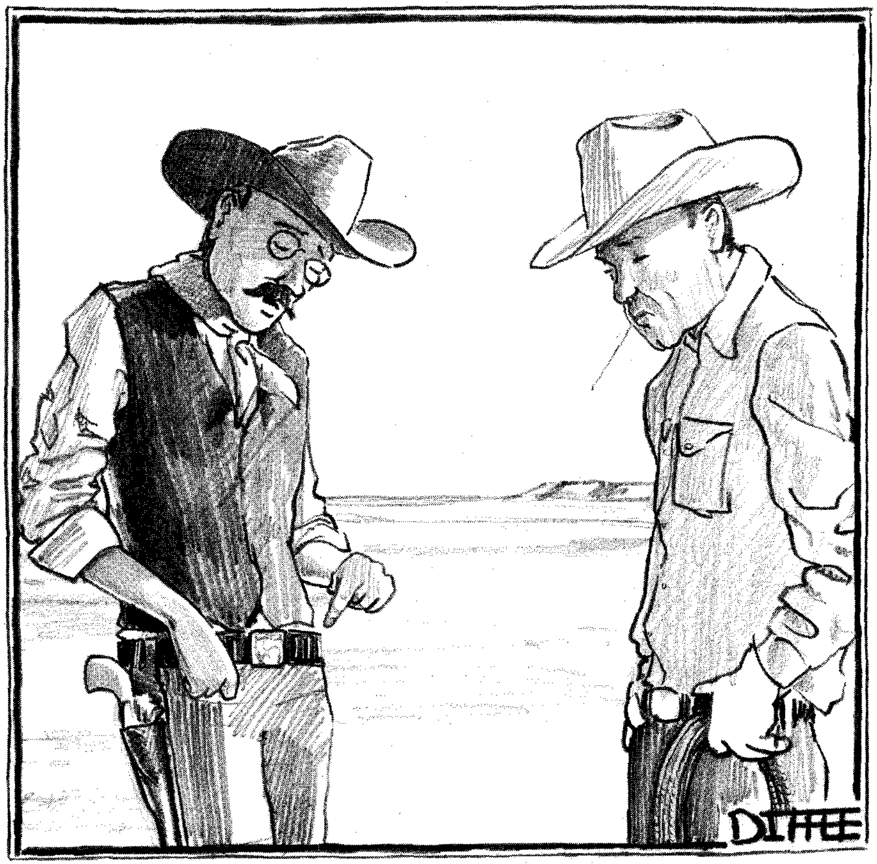
Adelson filed a suit in December, 2005, against John L. Smith, a veteran reporter whose column is one of the most widely read in the Las Vegas *Review-Journal.* Earlier that year, Smith had published "Sharks in the Desert," a book about Las Vegas moguls. Adelson charged that Smith; his publisher, Barricade Books; and Lyle Stuart, the owner of Barricade, had libelled him in a couple of pages in the book. "Smith deceptively manipulates language, quotations, and sources in order to concoct the smear that Adelson had dealings with the Boston Mob when Adelson was in the vending machine business. Smith's claims are baseless," the lawsuit said. "Adelson, a pillar of the community known for his philanthropic endeavors, is not, and has never been affiliated with organized crime." Last October, on the eve of trial, Smith filed for bankruptcy, which caused the case to be stayed. (Barricade Books also filed for bankruptcy; Lyle Stuart died last year.)

An article about the case and Smith's bankruptcy filing appeared in the *Review-Journal* on October 12, 2007. Smith explained that, after Adelson sued, Barricade inserted an errata sheet into unsold copies of the book, correcting errors that had led to the lawsuit. (The errata sheet said, in part, "No evidence exists that Adelson's early vending machine business activity was ever targeted by the Patriarca crime family or the Winter Hill Gang.") Smith noted, "I had agreed to publish in my column, which is read by far more people than ever read or will read the book, the most dramatic correction of my career. But whatever I agreed to do, they would then ask for more." In the same article, Adelson's attorney, Martin Singer, was quoted as saying, "We engaged in settlement negotiations with Mr. Smith in good faith. At the start of the negotiations we asked for $1 and an apology. Separate and apart from that we offered to establish a $200,000 medical fund for Mr. Smith's daughter whose condition Mr. Adelson learned about during the case. Mr. Smith turned down the trust and would not pay the dollar." (Smith's daughter, Amelia, now twelve, was given a diagnosis of a brain tumor three and a half years ago, and she has had multiple surgeries, radiation, and chemotherapy; her treatment is ongoing.)

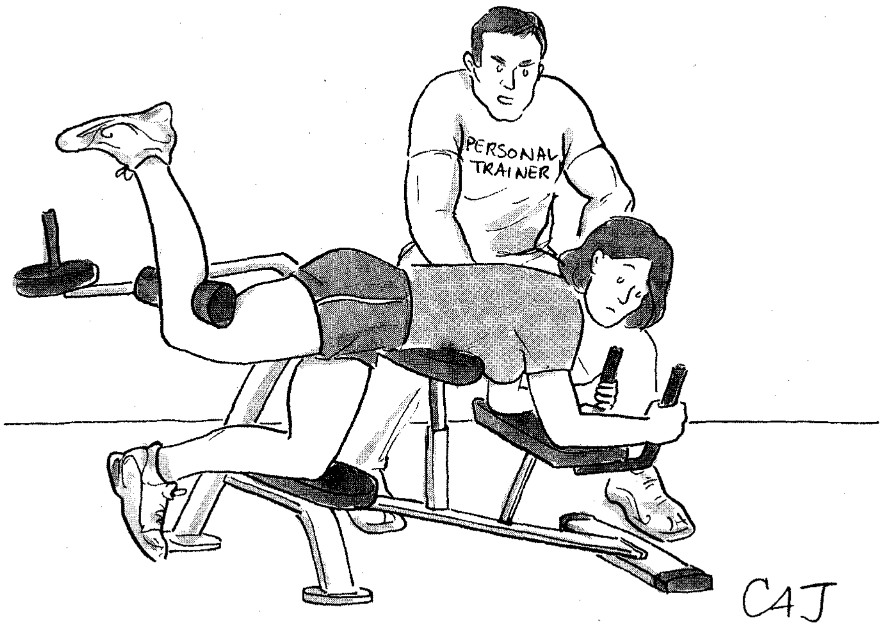
In the *Review-Journal* article, Smith denied what Singer said about the dollar and an apology. "Mr. Adelson wanted to enter a judgment against me, which would have been the same thing as a decision that I had committed constitutional malice," Smith said. "This was not true, and I refused to agree to it." He added that he could not ethically accept the offer of the medical fund, which, he told me, was conditioned on his keeping it secret, even from his boss. In the article, the editor of the *Review-Journal*, Thomas Mitchell, pointing to litigation against both the *Sun* and Smith, said of Adelson, "This whole series of events is nothing more nor less than trying to coerce everyone in journalism to not write anything he doesn't like."

The *Review-Journal* published a response from Adelson to what he said were "unjustified malicious assaults" by Smith (in his book) and Mitchell (in the *Review-Journal* article). He described the book's errors at length and reiterated, "All I wanted was an apology, a retraction and $1." He mentioned the two-hundred-thousand-dollar medical and educational fund. He also said, referring to Smith, "I had nothing to do with his bankruptcy." Adelson has filed a complaint in the bankruptcy case, to try to prevent any potential debt to him from being discharged, and to lift the stay in the libel case. Adelson is demanding at least fifteen million dollars in damages.

Adelson has not been shy about his new wealth. According to a guest at a reception in Washington a few years ago, Adelson remarked to President Bush, "You know, I am the richest Jew



"The first six are for bullets. This one here's for lip balm."



"Feeling stupid yet? No? Then keep going."

• •

in the world." He also introduced himself that way to a former Israeli official recently. The investment banker Ken Moelis said that when he saw Adelson not long ago he was surprised to hear him refer to himself as "Sheldon Adelson III." "I said, 'I never realized your father was Sheldon Adelson II,'" Moelis recalled. "And he said, 'He wasn't! But I'm the third-richest American!' " Adelson has said that he is planning how he will become No. 1, bypassing Warren Buffett, the current No. 2, and Bill Gates. (Gaming is not immune to the struggling economy: Las Vegas Sands lost $11.2 million in the first quarter of 2008, and its stock is trading at about half what it was in September, 2007.) Adelson seems to enjoy talking about his planes, particularly his new Boeing 767, and he keeps models of them on display in his office at the Venetian. He sometimes uses the planes to make a generous gesture; he loaned one to his friend Abraham Foxman, the head of the Anti-Defamation League, when Foxman had to fly cross-country on short notice, and he provided a plane to the sick daughter of a friend, to cheer her up. For Memorial Day weekend, he sent a plane to bring forty wounded Iraqi vets from the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, in Washington, to Las Vegas, and hosted them in the Venetian suites that are ordinarily reserved for high rollers. He and Miriam own houses in Malibu, Tel Aviv, and Boston; and two in the exclusive Summerlin neighborhood of Las Vegas—one is a residence, the other is used for entertaining. Last February, he hosted a fund-raiser for President Bush at his home in Summerlin. (Bush stayed at the Venetian.)

The Adelsons seem not to take their power for granted. Recently, Miriam told an associate, "I had a CD on Islamic jihad. I brought it to the White House and told the chief of staff, 'I would like the President to see this.' It really is amazing that we have this influence." (The White House declined to comment.) Last December, Bush named Adelson to the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations to the U.S. Trade Representative. The representative, Susan Schwab, paid a visit to Adelson at the Venetian to discuss his appointment. Adelson's interest in the position is not purely academic. Discussing his appointment with the Associated Press, Adelson said that he hopes to influence China to ease controls on its yuan. If that currency's value were to increase against the dollar, it would mean that Chinese gamblers could spend more, both in Las Vegas and in Macao. "The floating of the yuan would be like a grand slam home run, World Series, Super Bowl, and N.B.A. championship game all packed in one for us," Adelson declared, adding, "We're the largest investor of any kind in the history of China." In early August, during the Olympic Games, Las Vegas Sands will launch the Adelson Center for U.S.-China Enterprise, in Beijing, which seems positioned to wield substantial influence. If you were an American businessman coming to China, the Sands's Bill Weidner testified at the Suen trial, "you might need a logistics partner to deliver your goods. You might need a manufacturer to manufacture your goods. You might need a law firm. You might need an accounting firm. Whatever it would take to get you involved in business in China, we would—the center would help arrange for you."

Macao was, indeed, the "brass ring" for Adelson. It enriched him almost beyond imagining, and has continued to expand his business vistas ever since. But it also coincided with his illness. He was first stricken on his flight home from Beijing in July, 2001, after the meeting in the Purple Light Pavilion. "It has affected his energy and focus—and also his perspective on life," a longtime acquaintance of Adelson's said. "He should have been the happiest guy in the world. But he was confronted by this twist of fate, that he had all this wealth and all this power, but he couldn't walk. . . . I think it made him feel that life was not fair to him."

A doctor who treated his peripheral neuropathy now works with the Adelson Medical Research Foundation. "The two problems are money and the willingness of scientists to collaborate," Adelson told the guests at the Woodrow Wilson International Center awards dinner, in March. "We provide the money, they provide the collaboration. . . . We have over one hundred scientists from dozens of institutions collaborating together." He mentioned research into neuro-degenerative diseases, ovarian cancer, lymphoma, brain cancer, and melanoma. He described the effort as "this businessman's legacy in life."

As Adelson began to focus on the 2008 Presidential election, he apparently decided that his recent megabillionaire status would allow him to play a more prominent role than he had in the past. In early 2007, at a meeting in Florida of the Republican Jewish Coalition, Adelson and many of his allies resolved to create Freedom's Watch. As a nonprofit 501(C)(4), the organization can raise and spend unlimited amounts of money from wealthy individuals without any disclosure, if it can argue that it is promoting an issue, not a candidate.

Some conservatives have heralded Adelson as their answer to George Soros, the financier who has donated large sums to the liberal advocacy group MoveOn.org, and there were press reports that Adelson might spend two hundred million dollars on the 2008 elections. Last summer, Freedom's Watch spent fifteen million dollars on a nationwide ad campaign supporting the troop surge in Iraq, and in the fall it held a conference on radical Islam and Iran. But then Freedom's Watch seemed to recede, and, in April, articles in *Mother Jones* and the *Times* suggested that the organization had been so plagued by infighting, and by micromanaging on the part of its prime benefactor, Adelson—who since its inception had reportedly contributed some thirty million dollars—that it might not be a player in this fall's elections, after all. (The problems at Freedom's Watch are apparently not unique. One Republican consultant, after talking to members of a political organization that had received Adelson funding, said that he decided not to seek it for his group. "I don't want him telling me what to do every minute," the consultant told me.) In late April, however, Freedom's Watch reappeared, running ads against Democrats in special elections. And in its latest offensive, over Iraq-war funding, the organization has been targeting vulnerable Democrats—along with Representative Shelley Berkley, who holds one of the safest seats in the Nevada congressional delegation.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee seems to be taking Freedom's Watch seriously. Last month, in special elections for congressional seats in Louisiana and Mississippi, the D.C.C.C. aired ads on Christian radio stations which linked the Republican candidates with Sheldon Adelson. In Mississippi, one ad asked why the Republican candidate Greg Davis was accepting support from "the world's No. 1 casino czar and one of atheist China's top American business partners." It referred to Adelson's Macao enterprises as investments "in a country that steals our jobs, persecutes Christians, uses forced labor, and forces women to have abortions." The Democrats won in both contests.

Adelson has also continued to support the Republican Jewish Coalition, which has assumed an aggressive posture in the Presidential elections. Even before Senator Barack Obama became the presumptive Democratic nominee, the R.J.C. had been attacking him, trying to deepen the anxiety that some Jewish voters feel about his commitment to Israel. (A disclosure: my husband, the former U.S. congressman Mel Levine, a Democrat, serves as a Middle East foreign-policy adviser to the Obama campaign.)

In late March, Senator John McCain held a fund-raiser in Las Vegas. When the event was being planned, McCain called MGM Mirage's Terry Lanni—who has been a strong supporter of McCain for twenty years, including during his 2000 run for the Presidency—and asked him to co-host the event with Adelson, at the Venetian. Lanni agreed to the favor. A third co-host was the Republican consultant Sig Rogich, another longtime McCain supporter, who has also worked for Adelson. Rogich told me that although Adelson had been an ardent backer of Rudy Giuliani, once McCain became the presumptive nominee Adelson said he would support him. Rogich said that McCain had been "cementing his relationship with Adelson further," and added, "All I've tried to do is make sure the two communicate well, and that he understands the passion John McCain has for the issues that are so important to Sheldon Adelson—first and foremost, Israel."

On the morning of May 24th, after a six-week trial, the jury in the Suen case in Clark County District Court returned a verdict against Sheldon Adelson and his company, of $43.8 million. Adelson's lawyer, Rusty Hardin, said they would appeal. Meanwhile, another trial awaits the Sands, in Las Vegas in December; three co-plaintiffs, who say they served as middlemen in securing the Sands's Macao license, claim that they are owed five per cent of its Macao operations, and are suing for at least four hundred and fifty million dollars. (Two other cases have been filed by plaintiffs with similar allegations; one has been dismissed but is on appeal, and the other, which was filed in Tel Aviv, is awaiting a verdict. Las Vegas Sands says that the three suits are without merit.) In the Suen case, the jury's foreman said that the jurors decided in the first hour of deliberations that the plaintiff was owed money for having helped Adelson obtain the Macao license, and they spent the next nine hours trying to figure out what would be a fair sum. Suen had sued for a hundred million dollars; some jurors wanted to give him close to that, some much less, and they had compromised in the middle.

Adelson was a practiced witness. On the stand, he did not lash out, and only rarely tried to bully Suen's attorney, John O'Malley. He smiled genially in the direction of the jurors, noting that he had once been a court reporter and referring to his obedience to his wife ("Just like when my wife tells me to shut up, I shut up"). He was expansive in describing his climb out of poverty and his variegated business career. But under questioning by O'Malley about his claim to be a man of his word, for whom a handshake seals a deal, Adelson glowered, and launched into a recurrent refrain. "I know there's a perception in life that people who become financially successful do so by climbing up the broken backs of people whose backs they break, but . . . with the values that I grew up with, there's just no way that I—that any deal can be broken. . . . I never climbed up on . . . anybody's broken back," Adelson said. "I've earned every single thing. I came from poverty and now I'm considered one of the biggest philanthropists. . . . You know, business is such that if somebody does something wrong once, they get a reputation and people don't want to deal with them. But everybody wants to deal with me." ♦

ANNALS OF MEDICINE

THE ITCH

Its mysterious power may be a clue to a new theory about brains and bodies.

BY ATUL GAWANDE

It was still shocking to M. how much a few wrong turns could change your life. She had graduated from Boston College with a degree in psychology, married at twenty-five, and had two children, a son and a daughter. She and her family settled in a town on Massachusetts' southern shore. She worked for thirteen years in health care, becoming the director of a residence program for men who'd suffered severe head injuries. But she and her husband began fighting. There were betrayals. By the time she was thirty-two, her marriage had disintegrated. In the divorce, she lost possession of their home, and, amid her financial and psychological struggles, she saw that she was losing her children, too. Within a few years, she was drinking. She began dating someone, and they drank together. After a while, he brought some drugs home, and she tried them. The drugs got harder. Eventually, they were doing heroin, which turned out to be readily available from a street dealer a block away from her apartment.

One day, she went to see a doctor because she wasn't feeling well, and learned that she had contracted H.I.V. from a contaminated needle. She had to leave her job. She lost visiting rights with her children. And she developed complications from the H.I.V., including shingles, which caused painful, blistering sores across her scalp and forehead. With treatment, though, her H.I.V. was brought under control. At thirty-six, she entered rehab, dropped the boyfriend, and kicked the drugs. She had two good, quiet years in which she began rebuilding her life. Then she got the itch.

It was right after a shingles episode. The blisters and the pain responded, as they usually did, to acyclovir, an antiviral medication. But this time the area of the scalp that was involved became numb, and the pain was replaced by a constant, relentless itch. She felt it mainly on the right side of her head. It crawled along her scalp, and no matter how much she scratched it would not go away. "I felt like my inner self, like my brain itself, was itching," she says. And it took over her life just as she was starting to get it back.

Her internist didn't know what to make of the problem. Itching is an extraordinarily common symptom. All kinds of dermatological conditions can cause it: allergic reactions, bacterial or fungal infections, skin cancer, psoriasis, dandruff, scabies, lice, poison ivy, sun damage, or just dry skin. Creams and makeup can cause itch, too. But M. used ordinary shampoo and soap, no creams. And when the doctor examined M.'s scalp she discovered nothing abnormal—no rash, no redness, no scaling, no thickening, no fungus, no parasites. All she saw was scratch marks.

The internist prescribed a medicated cream, but it didn't help. The urge to scratch was unceasing and irresistible. "I would try to control it during the day, when I was aware of the itch, but it was really hard," M. said. "At night, it was the worst. I guess I would scratch when I was asleep, because in the morning there would be blood on my pillowcase." She began to lose her hair over the itchy area. She returned to her internist again and again. "I just kept haunting her and calling her," M. said. But nothing the internist tried worked, and she began to suspect that the itch had nothing to do with M.'s skin.

Plenty of non-skin conditions can cause itching. Dr. Jeffrey Bernhard, a dermatologist with the University of Massachusetts Medical School, is among the few doctors to study itching systematically (he published the definitive textbook on the subject), and he told me of cases caused by hyperthyroidism, iron deficiency, liver disease, and cancers like Hodgkin's lymphoma. Sometimes the syndrome is very specific. Persistent outer-arm itching that worsens in sunlight is known as brachioradial pruritus, and it's caused by a crimped nerve in the neck. Aquagenic pruritus is recurrent, intense, diffuse itching upon getting out of a bath or shower, and although no one knows the mechanism, it's a symptom of polycythemia vera, a rare condition in which the body produces too many red blood cells.

But M.'s itch was confined to the right side of her scalp. Her viral count showed that the H.I.V. was quiescent. Additional blood tests and X-rays were normal. So the internist concluded that M.'s problem was probably psychiatric. All sorts of psychiatric conditions can cause itching. Patients with psychosis can have cutaneous delusions—a belief that their skin is infested with, say, parasites, or crawling ants, or laced with tiny bits of fibreglass. Severe stress and other emotional experiences can also give rise to a physical symptom like itching—whether from the body's release of endorphins (natural opioids, which, like morphine, can cause itching), increased skin temperature, nervous scratching, or increased sweating. In M.'s case, the internist suspected trichotillomania, an obsessive-compulsive disorder in which patients have an irresistible urge to pull out their hair.

M. was willing to consider such possibilities. Her life had been a mess, after all. But the antidepressant medications often prescribed for O.C.D. made no difference. And she didn't actually feel a compulsion to pull out her hair. She simply felt *itchy*, on the area of her scalp that was left numb from the shingles. Although she could sometimes distract herself from it—by watching television or talking with a friend—the itch did not fluctuate with her mood or level of stress. The only thing that came close to offering relief was to scratch.

"Scratching is one of the sweetest gratifications of nature, and as ready at hand as any," Montaigne wrote. "But repentance follows too annoyingly close at its heels." For M., certainly, it did: the itching was so torturous, and the area so numb, that her scratching began to go

Scientists once saw itching as a form of pain. They now believe it to be a different order of sensation. Photograph by Gerald Slota.

through the skin. At a later office visit, her doctor found a silver-dollar-size patch of scalp where skin had been replaced by scab. M. tried bandaging her head, wearing caps to bed. But her fingernails would always find a way to her flesh, especially while she slept.

One morning, after she was awakened by her bedside alarm, she sat up and, she recalled, "this fluid came down my face, this greenish liquid." She pressed a square of gauze to her head and went to see her doctor again. M. showed the doctor the fluid on the dressing. The doctor looked closely at the wound. She shined a light on it and in M.'s eyes. Then she walked out of the room and called an ambulance. Only in the Emergency Department at Massachusetts General Hospital, after the doctors started swarming, and one told her she needed surgery *now*, did M. learn what had happened. She had scratched through her skull during the night—and all the way into her brain.

Itching is a most peculiar and diabolical sensation. The definition offered by the German physician Samuel Hafenreffer in 1660 has yet to be improved upon: An unpleasant sensation that provokes the desire to scratch. Itch has been ranked, by scientific and artistic observers alike, among the most distressing physical sensations one can experience. In Dante's Inferno, falsifiers were punished by "the burning rage / of fierce itching that nothing could relieve":

> The way their nails scraped down upon the scabs
> Was like a knife scraping off scales from carp. . . .
>
> "O you there tearing at your mail of scabs
> And even turning your fingers into pincers,"
> My guide began addressing one of them,
>
> "Tell us are there Italians among the souls
> Down in this hole and I'll pray that your nails
> Will last you in this task eternally."

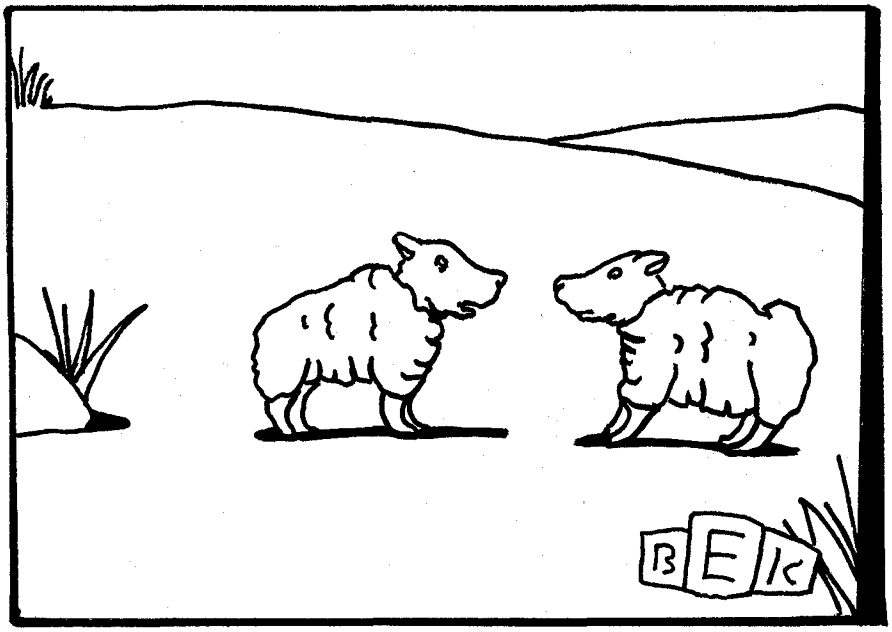
Though scratching can provide momentary relief, it often makes the itching worse. Dermatologists call this the itch-scratch cycle. Scientists believe that itch, and the accompanying scratch reflex, evolved in order to protect us from insects and clinging plant toxins—from such dangers as malaria, yellow fever, and dengue, transmitted by mosquitoes; from tularemia, river blindness, and sleeping sickness, transmitted by flies; from typhus-bearing lice, plague-bearing fleas, and poisonous spiders. The theory goes a long way toward explaining why itch is so exquisitely tuned. You can spend all day without noticing the feel of your shirt collar on your neck, and yet a single stray thread poking out, or a louse's fine legs brushing by, can set you scratching furiously.

But how, exactly, itch works has been a puzzle. For most of medical history, scientists thought that itching was merely a weak form of pain. Then, in 1987, the German researcher H. O. Handwerker and his colleagues used mild electric pulses to drive histamine, an itch-producing substance that the body releases during allergic reactions, into the skin of volunteers. As the researchers increased the dose of histamine, they found that they were able to increase the intensity of itch the volunteers reported, from the barely appreciable to the "maximum imaginable." Yet the volunteers never felt an increase in pain. The scientists concluded that itch and pain are entirely separate sensations, transmitted along different pathways.

Despite centuries spent mapping the body's nervous circuitry, scientists had never noticed a nerve specific for itch. But now the hunt was on, and a group of Swedish and German researchers embarked upon a series of tricky experiments. They inserted ultra-thin metal electrodes into the skin of paid volunteers, and wiggled them around until they picked up electrical signals from a single nerve fibre. Computers subtracted the noise from other nerve fibres crossing through the region. The researchers would then spend hours—as long as the volunteer could tolerate it—testing different stimuli on the skin in the area (a heated probe, for example, or a fine paintbrush) to see what would get the nerve to fire, and what the person experienced when it did.

They worked their way through fifty-three volunteers. Mostly, they encountered well-known types of nerve fibres that respond to temperature or light touch or mechanical pressure. "That feels warm," a volunteer might say, or "That feels soft," or "Ouch! Hey!" Several times, the scientists came across a nerve fibre that didn't respond to any of these stimuli. When they introduced a tiny dose of histamine into the skin, however, they observed a sharp electrical response in some of these nerve fibres, and the volunteer would experience an itch. They announced their discovery in a 1997 paper: they'd found a type of nerve that was specific for itch.

Unlike, say, the nerve fibres for pain, each of which covers a millimetre-size territory, a single itch fibre can pick up an itchy sensation more than three inches away. The fibres also turned out to have



"My self-esteem was so low I just followed her around everywhere she would go."

extraordinarily low conduction speeds, which explained why itchiness is so slow to build and so slow to subside.

Other researchers traced these fibres to the spinal cord and all the way to the brain. Examining functional PET-scan studies in healthy human subjects who had been given mosquito-bite-like histamine injections, they found a distinct signature of itch activity. Several specific areas of the brain light up: the part of the cortex that tells you where on your body the sensation occurs; the region that governs your emotional responses, reflecting the disagreeable nature of itch; and the limbic and motor areas that process irresistible urges (such as the urge to use drugs, among the addicted, or to overeat, among the obese), reflecting the ferocious impulse to scratch.

Now various phenomena became clear. Itch, it turns out, is indeed inseparable from the desire to scratch. It can be triggered chemically (by the saliva injected when a mosquito bites, say) or mechanically (from the mosquito's legs, even before it bites). The itch-scratch reflex activates higher levels of your brain than the spinal-cord-level reflex that makes you pull your hand away from a flame. Brain scans also show that scratching diminishes activity in brain areas associated with unpleasant sensations.

But some basic features of itch remained unexplained—features that make itch a uniquely revealing case study. On the one hand, our bodies are studded with receptors for itch, as they are with receptors for touch, pain, and other sensations; this provides an alarm system for harm and allows us to safely navigate the world. But why does a feather brushed across the skin sometimes itch and at other times tickle? (Tickling has a social component: you can make yourself itch, but only another person can tickle you.) And, even more puzzling, how is it that you can make yourself itchy just by thinking about it?

Contemplating what it's like to hold your finger in a flame won't make your finger hurt. But simply writing about a tick crawling up the nape of one's neck is enough to start my neck itching. Then my scalp. And then this one little spot along my flank where I'm beginning to wonder whether I should check to see if there might be something there. In one study, a German professor of psychosomatics gave a lecture that included, in the first half, a series of what might be called itchy slides, showing fleas, lice, people scratching, and the like, and, in the second half, more benign slides, with pictures of soft down, baby skin, bathers. Video cameras recorded the audience. Sure enough, the frequency of scratching among people in the audience increased markedly during the first half and decreased during the second. Thoughts made them itch.

We now have the nerve map for itching, as we do for other sensations. But a deeper puzzle remains: how much of our sensations and experiences do nerves really explain?

In the operating room, a neurosurgeon washed out and debrided M.'s wound, which had become infected. Later, a plastic surgeon covered it with a graft of skin from her thigh. Though her head was wrapped in layers of gauze and she did all she could to resist the still furious itchiness, she awoke one morning to find that she had rubbed the graft away. The doctors returned her to the operating room for a second skin graft, and this time they wrapped her hands as well. She rubbed it away again anyway.

"They kept telling me I had O.C.D.," M. said. A psychiatric team was sent in to see her each day, and the resident would ask her, "As a child, when you walked down the street did you count the lines? Did you do anything repetitive? Did you have to count everything you saw?" She kept telling him no, but he seemed skeptical. He tracked down her family and asked them, but they said no, too. Psychology tests likewise ruled out obsessive-compulsive disorder. They showed depression, though, and, of course, there was the history of addiction. So the doctors still thought her scratching was from a psychiatric disorder. They gave her drugs that made her feel logy and sleep a lot. But the itching was as bad as ever, and she still woke up scratching at that terrible wound.

One morning, she found, as she put it, "this very bright and happy-looking woman standing by my bed. She said, 'I'm Dr. Oaklander,'" M. recalled. "I thought, Oh great. Here we go again. But she explained that she was a neurologist, and she said, 'The first thing I want to say to you is that I don't think you're crazy. I don't think you have O.C.D.' At that moment, I really saw her grow wings and a halo," M. told me. "I said, 'Are you sure?' And she said, 'Yes. I have heard of this before.'"

Anne Louise Oaklander was about the same age as M. Her mother is a prominent neurologist at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, in New York, and she'd followed her into the field. Oaklander had specialized in disorders of peripheral nerve sensation—disorders like shingles. Although pain is the most common symptom of shingles, Oaklander had noticed during her training that some patients also had itching, occasionally severe, and seeing M. reminded her of one of her shingles patients. "I remember standing in a hallway talking to her, and what she complained about—her major concern—was that she was tormented by this terrible itch over the eye where she had had shingles," she told me. When Oaklander looked at her, she thought that something wasn't right. It took a moment to realize why. "The itch was so severe, she had scratched off her eyebrow."

Oaklander tested the skin near M.'s wound. It was numb to temperature, touch, and pinprick. Nonetheless, it was itchy, and when it was scratched or rubbed M. felt the itchiness temporarily subside. Oaklander injected a few drops of local anesthetic into the skin. To M.'s surprise, the itching stopped—instantly and almost entirely. This was the first real relief she'd had in more than a year.

It was an imperfect treatment, though. The itch came back when the anesthetic wore off, and, although Oaklander tried having M. wear an anesthetic patch over the wound, the effect diminished over time. Oaklander did not have an explanation for any of this. When she took a biopsy of the itchy skin, it showed that ninety-six per cent of the nerve fibres were gone. So why was the itch so intense?

Oaklander came up with two theories. The first was that those few remaining nerve fibres were itch fibres and, with no other fibres around to offer competing signals, they had become constantly active. The second theory was the opposite. The nerves were dead, but perhaps the itch system in M.'s brain had gone haywire, running on a loop all its own.

The second theory seemed less likely. If the nerves to her scalp were dead, how would you explain the relief she got from scratching, or from the local anesthetic? Indeed, how could you explain the itch in the first place? An itch without nerve endings didn't make sense. The neurosurgeons stuck with the first theory; they offered to cut the main sensory nerve to the front of M.'s scalp and abolish the itching permanently. Oaklander, however, thought that the second theory was the right one—that this was a brain problem, not a nerve problem—and that cutting the nerve would do more harm than good. She argued with the neurosurgeons, and she advised M. not to let them do any cutting.

"But I was desperate," M. told me. She let them operate on her, slicing the supraorbital nerve above the right eye. When she woke up, a whole section of her forehead was numb—and the itching was gone. A few weeks later, however, it came back, in an even wider expanse than before. The doctors tried pain medications, more psychiatric medications, more local anesthetic. But the only thing that kept M. from tearing her skin and skull open again, the doctors found, was to put a foam football helmet on her head and bind her wrists to the bedrails at night.

She spent the next two years committed to a locked medical ward in a rehabilitation hospital—because, although she was not mentally ill, she was considered a danger to herself. Eventually, the staff worked out a solution that did not require binding her to the bedrails. Along with the football helmet, she had to wear white mitts that were secured around her wrists by surgical tape. "Every bedtime, it looked like they were dressing me up for Halloween—me and the guy next to me," she told me.

"The guy next to you?" I asked. He had had shingles on his neck, she explained, and also developed a persistent itch. "Every night, they would wrap up his hands and wrap up mine." She spoke more softly now. "But I heard he ended up dying from it, because he scratched into his carotid artery."

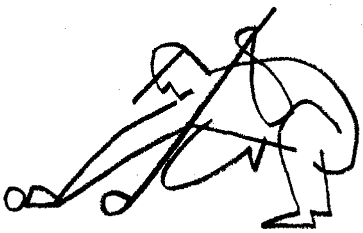
I met M. seven years after she'd been discharged from the rehabilitation hospital. She is forty-eight now. She lives in a three-room apartment, with a crucifix and a bust of Jesus on the wall and the low yellow light of table lamps strung with beads over their shades. Stacked in a wicker basket next to her coffee table were Rick Warren's "The Purpose Driven Life," *People*, and the latest issue of *Neurology Now*, a magazine for patients. Together, they summed up her struggles, for she is still fighting the meaninglessness, the isolation, and the physiology of her predicament.

She met me at the door in a wheelchair; the injury to her brain had left her partially paralyzed on the left side of her body. She remains estranged from her children. She has not, however, relapsed into drinking or drugs. Her H.I.V. remains under control. Although the itch on her scalp and forehead persists, she has gradually learned to protect herself. She trims her nails short. She finds ways to distract herself. If she must scratch, she tries to rub gently instead. And, if that isn't enough, she uses a soft toothbrush or a rolled-up terry cloth. "I don't use anything sharp," she said. The two years that she spent bound up in the hospital seemed to have broken the nighttime scratching. At home, she found that she didn't need to wear the helmet and gloves anymore.

Still, the itching remains a daily torment. "I don't normally tell people this," she said, "but I have a fantasy of shaving off my eyebrow and taking a metal-wire grill brush and scratching away."

Some of her doctors have not been willing to let go of the idea that this has been a nerve problem all along. A local neurosurgeon told her that the original operation to cut the sensory nerve to her scalp must not have gone deep enough. "He wants to go in again," she told me.

A new scientific understanding of perception has emerged in the past few decades, and it has overturned classical, centuries-long beliefs about how our brains work—though it has apparently not penetrated the medical world yet. The old understanding of perception is what neuroscientists call "the naïve view," and it is the view that most people, in or out of medicine, still have. We're inclined to think that people normally perceive things in the world directly. We believe that the hardness of a rock, the coldness of an ice cube, the itchiness of a sweater are picked up by our nerve endings, transmitted through the spinal cord like a message through a wire, and decoded by the brain.



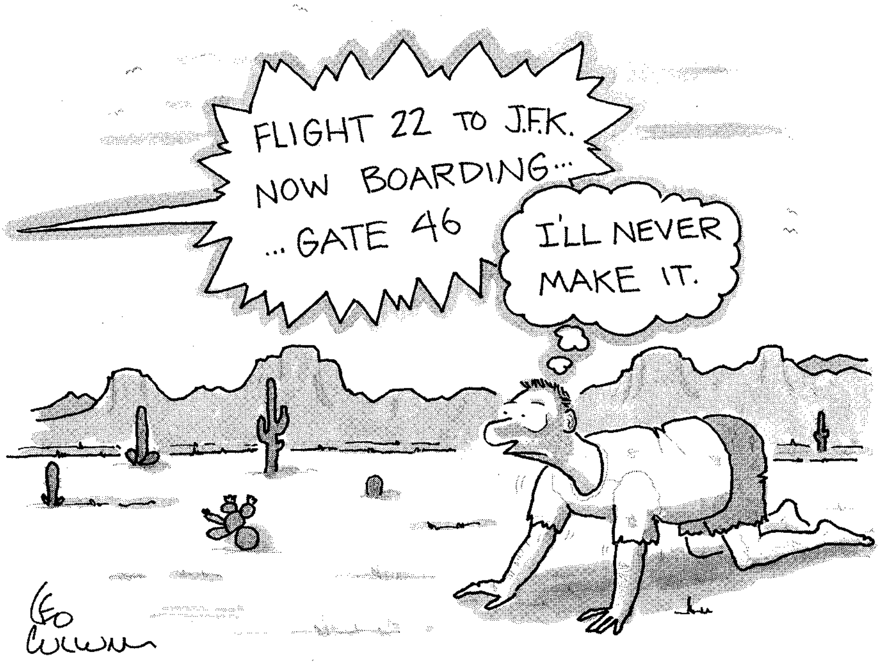
In a 1710 "Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge," the Irish philosopher George Berkeley objected to this view. We do not know the world of objects, he argued; we know only our mental ideas of objects. "Light and colours, heat and cold, extension and figures—in a word, the things we see and feel—what are they but so many sensations, notions, ideas?" Indeed, he concluded, the objects of the world are likely just inventions of the mind, put in there by God. To which Samuel Johnson famously responded by kicking a large stone and declaring, "I refute it *thus!*"

Still, Berkeley had recognized some serious flaws in the direct-perception theory—in the notion that when we see, hear, or feel we are just taking in the sights, sounds, and textures of the world. For one thing, it cannot explain how we experience things that seem physically real but aren't: sensations of itching that arise from nothing more than itchy thoughts; dreams that can seem indistinguishable from reality; phantom sensations that amputees have in their missing limbs. And, the more we examine the actual nerve transmissions we receive from the world outside, the more inadequate they seem.

Our assumption had been that the sensory data we receive from our eyes, ears, nose, fingers, and so on contain all the information that we need for perception, and that perception must work something like a radio. It's hard to conceive that a Boston Symphony Orchestra concert is in a radio wave. But it is. So you might think that it's the same with the signals we receive—that if you hooked up someone's nerves to a monitor you could watch what the person is experiencing as if it were a television show.

Yet, as scientists set about analyzing the signals, they found them to be radically impoverished. Suppose someone is viewing a tree in a clearing. Given simply the transmissions along the optic nerve from the light entering the eye, one would not be able to reconstruct the three-dimensionality, or the distance, or the detail of the bark—attributes that we perceive instantly.

Or consider what neuroscientists call "the binding problem." Tracking a dog as it runs behind a picket fence, all that your eyes receive is separated vertical images of the dog, with large slices missing. Yet somehow you perceive the mutt to be


FLIGHT 22 TO J.F.K. NOW BOARDING... ...GATE 46
I'LL NEVER MAKE IT.

whole, an intact entity travelling through space. Put two dogs together behind the fence and you don't think they've morphed into one. Your mind now configures the slices as two independent creatures.

The images in our mind are extraordinarily rich. We can tell if something is liquid or solid, heavy or light, dead or alive. But the information we work from is poor—a distorted, two-dimensional transmission with entire spots missing. So the mind fills in most of the picture. You can get a sense of this from brain-anatomy studies. If visual sensations were primarily received rather than constructed by the brain, you'd expect that most of the fibres going to the brain's primary visual cortex would come from the retina. Instead, scientists have found that only twenty per cent do; eighty per cent come downward from regions of the brain governing functions like memory. Richard Gregory, a prominent British neuropsychologist, estimates that visual perception is more than ninety per cent memory and less than ten per cent sensory nerve signals. When Oaklander theorized that M.'s itch was endogenous, rather than generated by peripheral nerve signals, she was onto something important.

The fallacy of reducing perception to reception is especially clear when it comes to phantom limbs. Doctors have often explained such sensations as a matter of inflamed or frayed nerve endings in the stump sending aberrant signals to the brain. But this explanation should long ago have been suspect. Efforts by surgeons to cut back on the nerve typically produce the same results that M. had when they cut the sensory nerve to her forehead: a brief period of relief followed by a return of the sensation.

Moreover, the feelings people experience in their phantom limbs are far too varied and rich to be explained by the random firings of a bruised nerve. People report not just pain but also sensations of sweatiness, heat, texture, and movement in a missing limb. There is no experience people have with real limbs that they do not experience with phantom limbs. They feel their phantom leg swinging, water trickling down a phantom arm, a phantom ring becoming too tight for a phantom digit. Children have used phantom fingers to count and solve arithmetic problems. V. S. Ramachandran, an eminent neuroscientist at the University of California, San Diego, has written up the case of a woman who was born with only stumps at her shoulders, and yet, as far back as she could remember, felt herself to have arms and hands; she even feels herself gesticulating when she speaks. And phantoms do not occur just in limbs. Around half of women who have undergone a mastectomy experience a phantom breast, with the nipple being the most vivid part. You've likely had an experience of phantom sensation yourself. When the dentist gives you a local anesthetic, and your lip goes numb, the nerves go dead. Yet you don't feel your lip disappear. Quite the opposite: it feels larger and plumper than normal, even though you can see in a mirror that the size hasn't changed.

The account of perception that's starting to emerge is what we might call the "brain's best guess" theory of perception: perception is the brain's best guess about what is happening in the outside world. The mind integrates scattered, weak, rudimentary signals from a variety of sensory channels, information from past experiences, and hard-wired processes, and produces a sensory experience full of brain-provided color, sound, texture, and meaning. We see a friendly yellow Labrador bounding behind a picket fence not because that is the transmission we receive but because this is the perception our weaver-brain assembles as its best hypothesis of what is out there from the slivers of information we get. Perception is inference.

The theory—and a theory is all it is right now—has begun to make sense of some bewildering phenomena. Among them is an experiment that Ramachandran performed with volunteers who had phantom pain in an amputated arm. They put their surviving arm through a hole in the side of a box with a mirror inside, so that, peering through the open top, they would see their arm and its mirror image, as if they had two arms. Ramachandran then asked them to move both their intact arm and, in their mind, their phantom arm—to pretend that they were conducting an orchestra, say. The patients had the sense that they had two arms again. Even though they knew it was an illusion, it provided immediate relief. People who for years had been unable to unclench their phantom fist suddenly felt their hand open; phantom arms in painfully contorted positions could relax. With daily use of the mirror box over weeks, patients sensed their phantom limbs actually shrink into their stumps and, in several instances, completely vanish. Researchers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center recently published the results of a randomized trial of mirror therapy for soldiers with phantom-limb pain, showing dramatic success.

A lot about this phenomenon remains murky, but here's what the new theory suggests is going on: when your arm is amputated, nerve transmissions are shut off, and the brain's best guess often seems to be that the arm is still there, but paralyzed, or clenched, or beginning to cramp up. Things can stay like this for years. The mirror box, however, provides the brain with new visual input—however illusory—suggesting motion in the absent arm. The brain has to incorporate the new information into its sensory map of what's happening. Therefore, it guesses again, and the pain goes away.

The new theory may also explain what was going on with M.'s itch. The shingles destroyed most of the nerves in her scalp. And, for whatever reason, her brain surmised from what little input it had that something horribly itchy was going on—that perhaps a whole army of ants were crawling back and forth over just that patch of skin. There wasn't any such thing, of course. But M.'s brain has received no contrary signals that would shift its assumptions. So she itches.

Not long ago, I met a man who made me wonder whether such phantom sensations are more common than we realize. H. was forty-eight, in good health, an officer at a Boston financial-services company living with his wife in a western suburb, when he made passing mention of an odd pain to his internist. For at least twenty years, he said, he'd had a mild tingling running along his left arm and down the left side of his body, and, if he tilted his neck forward at a particular angle, it became a pronounced, electrical jolt. The internist recognized this as Lhermitte's sign, a classic symptom that can indicate multiple sclerosis, Vitamin B_{12} deficiency, or spinal-cord compression from a tumor or a herniated disk. An MRI revealed a cavernous hemangioma, a pea-size mass of dilated blood vessels, pressing into the spinal cord in his neck. A week later, while the doctors were still contemplating what to do, it ruptured.

“I was raking leaves out in the yard and, all of a sudden, there was an explosion of pain and my left arm wasn't responding to my brain,” H. said when I visited him at home. Once the swelling subsided, a neurosurgeon performed a tricky operation to remove the tumor from the spinal cord. The operation was successful, but afterward H. began experiencing a constellation of strange sensations. His left hand felt cartoonishly large—at least twice its actual size. He developed a constant burning pain along an inch-wide ribbon extending from the left side of his neck all the way down his arm. And an itch crept up and down along the same band, which no amount of scratching would relieve.

H. has not accepted that these sensations are here to stay—the prospect is too depressing—but they've persisted for eleven years now. Although the burning is often tolerable during the day, the slightest thing can trigger an excruciating flareup—a cool breeze across the skin, the brush of a shirtsleeve or a bedsheet. “Sometimes I feel that my skin has been flayed and my flesh is exposed, and any touch is just very painful,” he told me. “Sometimes I feel that there's an ice pick or a wasp sting. Sometimes I feel that I've been splattered with hot cooking oil.”

EY HAS EAR INFECTION... BASEMENT SINK LEAKING... PED... ROOF C
GET MILK... DINNER W/ NELSONS THURS. AT 6:30... AUNT HOSPITAL...
Dd

For all that, the itch has been harder to endure. H. has developed calluses from the incessant scratching. “I find I am choosing itch relief over the pain that I am provoking by satisfying the itch,” he said.

He has tried all sorts of treatments—medications, acupuncture, herbal remedies, lidocaine injections, electrical-stimulation therapy. But nothing really worked, and the condition forced him to retire in 2001. He now avoids leaving the house. He gives himself projects. Last year, he built a three-foot stone wall around his yard, slowly placing the stones by hand. But he spends much of his day, after his wife has left for work, alone in the house with their three cats, his shirt off and the heat turned up, trying to prevent a flareup.

His neurologist introduced him to me, with his permission, as an example of someone with severe itching from a central rather than a peripheral cause. So one morning we sat in his living room trying to puzzle out what was going on. The sun streamed in through a big bay window. One of his cats, a scraggly brown tabby, curled up beside me on the couch. H. sat in an armchair in a baggy purple T-shirt he'd put on for my visit. He told me that he thought his problem was basically a “bad switch” in his neck where the tumor had been, a kind of loose wire sending false signals to his brain. But I told him about the increasing evidence that our sensory experiences are not sent to the brain but originate in it. When I got to the example of phantom-limb sensations, he perked up. The experiences of phantom-limb patients sounded familiar to him. When I mentioned that he might want to try the mirror-box treatment, he agreed. “I have a mirror upstairs,” he said.

He brought a cheval glass down to the living room, and I had him stand with his chest against the side of it, so that his troublesome left arm was behind it and his normal right arm was in front. He tipped his head so that when he looked into the mirror the image of his right arm seemed to occupy the same position as his left arm. Then I had him wave his arms, his actual arms, as if he were conducting an orchestra.

The first thing he expressed was disappointment. "It isn't quite like looking at my left hand," he said. But then suddenly it was.

"Wow!" he said. "Now, this is odd."

After a moment or two, I noticed that he had stopped moving his left arm. Yet he reported that he still felt as if it were moving. What's more, the sensations in it had changed dramatically. For the first time in eleven years, he felt his left hand "snap" back to normal size. He felt the burning pain in his arm diminish. And the itch, too, was dulled.

"This is positively bizarre," he said.

He still felt the pain and the itch in his neck and shoulder, where the image in the mirror cut off. And, when he came away from the mirror, the aberrant sensations in his left arm returned. He began using the mirror a few times a day, for fifteen minutes or so at a stretch, and I checked in with him periodically.

"What's most dramatic is the change in the size of my hand," he says. After a couple of weeks, his hand returned to feeling normal in size all day long.

The mirror also provided the first effective treatment he has had for the flares of itch and pain that sporadically seize him. Where once he could do nothing but sit and wait for the torment to subside—it sometimes took an hour or more—he now just pulls out the mirror. "I've never had anything like this before," he said. "It's my magic mirror."

There have been other, isolated successes with mirror treatment. In Bath, England, several patients suffering from what is called complex regional pain syndrome—severe, disabling limb sensations of unknown cause—were reported to have experienced complete resolution after six weeks of mirror therapy. In California, mirror therapy helped stroke patients recover from a condition known as hemineglect, which produces something like the opposite of a phantom limb—these patients have a part of the body they no longer realize is theirs.

Such findings open up a fascinating prospect: perhaps many patients whom doctors treat as having a nerve injury or a disease have, instead, what might be called sensor syndromes. When your car's dashboard warning light keeps telling you that there is an engine failure, but the mechanics can't find anything wrong, the sensor itself may be the problem. This is no less true for human beings. Our sensations of pain, itch, nausea, and fatigue are normally protective. Unmoored from physical reality, however, they can become a nightmare: M., with her intractable itching, and H., with his constellation of strange symptoms—but perhaps also the hundreds of thousands of people in the United States alone who suffer from conditions like chronic back pain, fibromyalgia, chronic pelvic pain, tinnitus, temporomandibular joint disorder, or repetitive strain injury, where, typically, no amount of imaging, nerve testing, or surgery manages to uncover an anatomical explanation. Doctors have persisted in treating these conditions as nerve or tissue problems—engine failures, as it were. We get under the hood and remove this, replace that, snip some wires. Yet still the sensor keeps going off.

So we get frustrated. "There's nothing wrong," we'll insist. And, the next thing you know, we're treating the driver instead of the problem. We prescribe tranquillizers, antidepressants, escalating doses of narcotics. And the drugs often do make it easier for people to ignore the sensors, even if they are wired right into the brain. The mirror treatment, by contrast, targets the deranged sensor system itself. It essentially takes a misfiring sensor—a warning system functioning under an illusion that something is terribly wrong out in the world it monitors—and feeds it an alternate set of signals that calm it down. The new signals may even reset the sensor.

This may help explain, for example, the success of the advice that back specialists now commonly give. Work through the pain, they tell many of their patients, and, surprisingly often, the pain goes away. It had been a mystifying phenomenon. But the picture now seems clearer. Most chronic back pain starts as an acute back pain—say, after a fall. Usually, the pain subsides as the injury heals. But in some cases the pain sensors continue to light up long after the tissue damage is gone. In such instances, working through the pain may offer the brain contradictory feedback—a signal that ordinary activity does not, in fact, cause physical harm. And so the sensor resets.

This understanding of sensation points to an entire new array of potential treatments—based not on drugs or surgery but, instead, on the careful manipulation of our perceptions. Researchers at the University of Manchester, in England, have gone a step beyond mirrors and fashioned an immersive virtual-reality system for treating patients with phantom-limb pain. Detectors transpose movement of real limbs into a virtual world where patients feel they are actually moving, stretching, even playing a ballgame. So far, five patients have tried the system, and they have all experienced a reduction in pain. Whether those results will last has yet to be established. But the approach raises the possibility of designing similar systems to help patients with other sensor syndromes. How, one wonders, would someone with chronic back pain fare in a virtual world? The Manchester study suggests that there may be many ways to fight our phantoms.

I called Ramachandran to ask him about M.'s terrible itch. The sensation may be a phantom, but it's on her scalp, not in a limb, so it seemed unlikely that his mirror approach could do anything for her. He told me about an experiment in which he put ice-cold water in people's ears. This confuses the brain's position sensors, tricking subjects into thinking that their heads are moving, and in certain phantom-limb and stroke patients the illusion corrected their misperceptions, at least temporarily. Maybe this would help M., he said. He had another idea. If you take two mirrors and put them at right angles to each other, you will get a non-reversed mirror image. Looking in, the right half of your face appears on the left and the left half appears on the right. But unless you move, he said, your brain may not realize that the image is flipped.

"Now, suppose she looks in this mirror and scratches the left side of her head. No, wait—I'm thinking out loud here—suppose she looks and you have *someone else* touch the left side of her head. It'll look—maybe it'll feel—like you're touching the right side of her head." He let out an impish giggle. "Maybe this would make her itchy right scalp feel more normal." Maybe it would encourage her brain to make a different perceptual inference; maybe it would press reset. "Who knows?" he said.

It seemed worth a try. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM
Atul Gawande talks about itching.

FICTION

DEEP-HOLES

BY ALICE MUNRO

Sally packed devilled eggs—something she usually hated to take on a picnic, because they were so messy. Ham sandwiches, crab salad, lemon tarts—also a packing problem. Kool-Aid for the boys, a half bottle of Mumm’s for herself and Alex. She would have just a sip, because she was still nursing. She had bought plastic champagne glasses for the occasion, but when Alex spotted her handling them he got the real ones—a wedding present—out of the china cabinet. She protested, but he insisted, and took charge of them himself, the wrapping and packing.

“Dad is really a sort of *bourgeois gentilhomme*,” Kent would say to Sally a few years later, when he was in his teens and acing everything at school, so sure of becoming some sort of scientist that he could get away with spouting French around the house.

“Don’t make fun of your father,” Sally said mechanically.

“I’m not. It’s just that most geologists seem so grubby.”

The picnic was in honor of Alex’s publishing his first solo paper, in *Zeitschrift für Geomorphologie*. They were going to Osler Bluff because it figured largely in his research, and because Sally and the children had never been there.

They drove a couple of miles down a rough country road—having turned off the highway and then off a decent unpaved country road—and found a place for cars to park, with no cars in it at present. A sign was painted on a board and needed retouching: “CAUTION. DEEP-HOLES.”

Why the hyphen? Sally thought. But who cares?

The entrance to the woods looked quite ordinary and unthreatening. Sally understood, of course, that these woods were on top of a high bluff, and she expected a daunting lookout somewhere. She did not expect the danger that had to be skirted almost immediately in front of them.

Deep chambers, really, some the size of a coffin, some much bigger than that, like rooms cut out of the rocks. Corridors zigzagging between them, and ferns and mosses growing out of the walls. Not enough greenery, however, to make any sort of cushion over the rubble below. The path went meandering between them, over hard earth and shelves of not quite level rock.

EDITH MAYBIN, “UNTITLED” (2008)/EDWYNN HOUK GALLERY

“Oooeee,” came the cry of the boys, Kent and Peter, nine and six years old, running ahead.

“No tearing around in here,” Alex called. “No stupid showing off, you hear me? You understand? Answer me.”

They said O.K., and he proceeded, carrying the picnic basket and apparently believing that no further fatherly warning was necessary. Sally stumbled after him faster than was easy for her, with the diaper bag and the baby, Savanna. She couldn’t slow down till she had her sons in sight, saw them trotting along taking sidelong looks into the black crevasses, still making exaggerated but discreet noises of horror. She was nearly crying with exhaustion and alarm and some familiar sort of seeping rage.

The lookout did not appear until they had followed the dirt-and-rock path for what seemed to her like half a mile, and was probably a quarter mile. Then there was a brightening, an intrusion of sky, and her husband halted ahead. He gave a cry of arrival and display, and the boys hooted with true astonishment. Sally, emerging from the woods, found them lined up on an outcrop above the treetops—above several levels of treetops, as it turned out—with the summer fields spread far below in a shimmer of green and yellow.

As soon as she put Savanna down on her blanket, she began to cry.

“Hungry,” Sally said.

Alex said, “I thought she got her lunch in the car.”

“She did. But she’s hungry again.”

She got Savanna latched on to one side and with her free hand unfastened the picnic basket. This was not how Alex had envisioned things. But he gave a good-humored sigh and retrieved the champagne glasses from their wrappings in his pockets, placing them on their sides on a patch of grass.

“Glug glug. I’m thirsty, too,” Kent said, and Peter immediately imitated him.

“Glug glug. Me, too. Glug glug.”

“Shut up,” Alex said.

Kent said, “Shut up, Peter.”

Alex said to Sally, “What did you bring for them to drink?”

“Kool-Aid, in the blue jug. The plastic glasses are in a napkin on top.”

Of course, Alex believed that Kent had started that nonsense not because he was really thirsty but because he was crudely excited by the sight of Sally’s breast. He thought it was high time that Savanna was transferred to the bottle—she was nearly six months old. And he thought Sally was far too casual about the whole procedure, sometimes going around the kitchen doing things with one hand while the infant guzzled. With Kent sneaking peeks and Peter referring to Mommy’s milk jugs. That came from Kent, Alex said. Kent was a troublemaker and the possessor of a dirty mind.

“Well, I have to do things,” Sally said.

“That’s not one of the things you have to do. You could have her on the bottle tomorrow.”

“I will soon. Not quite tomorrow, but soon.”

But here she is, still letting Savanna and the milk jugs dominate the picnic.

The Kool-Aid is poured, then the champagne. Sally and Alex touch glasses, with Savanna between them. Sally has her sip and wishes she could have more. She smiles at Alex to communicate this wish, and maybe the idea that it would be nice to be alone with him. He drinks his champagne, and, as if her sip and smile were enough to soothe him, he starts in on the picnic. She points out which sandwiches have the mustard he likes and which have the mustard she and Peter like and which are for Kent, who likes no mustard at all.

While this is going on, Kent manages to slip behind her and finish up her champagne. Peter must have seen him do this, but for some peculiar reason he does not tell on him. Sally discovers what has happened some time later and Alex never knows about it at all, because he soon forgets that there was anything left in her glass and packs it neatly away with his own, while telling the boys about dolostone. They listen, presumably, as they gobble up the sandwiches and ignore the devilled eggs and crab salad and grab the tarts.

Dolostone, Alex says, is the thick caprock they can see. Underneath it is shale, clay turned into rock, very fine, fine-grained. Water works through the dolostone and when it gets to the shale it just lies there; it can’t get through the thin layers. So the erosion—that’s the destruction of the dolostone—is caused as the water works its way back to its source, eats a channel back, and the caprock develops vertical joints. Do they know what "vertical" means?

"Up and down," Kent says lackadaisically.

"Weak vertical joints, and they get to lean out and then they leave crevasses behind them and after millions of years they break off altogether and go tumbling down the slope."

"I have to go," Kent says.

"Go where?"

"I have to go pee."

"Oh, for God's sake, go."

"Me, too," Peter says.

Sally clamps her mouth down on the automatic injunction to be careful. Alex looks at her and approves of the clamping down. They smile faintly at each other.

Savanna has fallen asleep, her lips slack around the nipple. With the boys out of the way, it's easier to detach her. Sally can burp her and settle her on the blanket, without worrying about an exposed breast. If Alex finds the sight distasteful—she knows he dislikes the whole conjunction of sex and nourishment, his wife's breasts turned into udders—he can look away, and he does.

As she buttons herself up, there comes a cry, not sharp but lost, diminishing, and Alex is on his feet before she is, running along the path. Then a louder cry getting closer. It's Peter.

"Kent falled in. Kent falled in."

His father yells, "I'm coming."

Sally will always believe that she knew at once—even before she heard Peter's voice, she knew what had happened. If an accident had happened, it would not be to her six-year-old, who was brave but not inventive, not a showoff. It would be to Kent. She could see exactly how—peeing into a hole, balancing on the rim, teasing Peter, teasing himself.

He was alive. He was lying far down in the rubble at the bottom of the crevasse, but he was moving his arms, struggling to push himself up. Struggling so feebly. One leg caught under him, the other oddly bent.

"Can you carry the baby?" she said to Peter. "Go back to the picnic and put her on the blanket and watch her. That's my good boy. My good strong boy."

Alex was on his way into the hole, scrambling down, telling Kent to stay still. Getting down in one piece was just possible. It would be getting Kent out that was hard.

Should she run to the car and see if there was a rope? Tie the rope around a tree trunk? Maybe tie it around Kent's body so she could lift him when Alex raised him up to her?

There wouldn't be a rope. Why would there be a rope?

Alex had reached him. He bent and lifted him. Kent gave a beseeching scream of pain. Alex draped him around his shoulders, Kent's head hanging down on one side and useless legs—one so unnaturally protruding—on the other. He rose, stumbled a couple of steps, and while still hanging on to Kent dropped back down to his knees. He had decided to crawl and was making his way—Sally understood this now—to the rubble that partly filled the far end of the crevasse. He shouted some order to her without raising his head, and though she could not make out any word she knew what he wanted. She got up off her knees—why was she on her knees?—and pushed through some saplings to that edge of the rim, where the rubble came to within perhaps three feet of the surface. Alex was still crawling along with Kent dangling from him like a shot deer.

She called, "I'm here. I'm here."

Kent would have to be raised up by his father, pulled to the solid shelf of rock by his mother. He was a skinny boy, who had not yet reached his first spurt of growth, but he seemed as heavy as a bag of cement. Sally's arms could not do it on the first try. She shifted her position, crouching instead of lying flat on her stomach, and with the full power of her shoulders and chest and with Alex supporting and lifting Kent's body from beneath they heaved him over. Sally fell back with him in her arms and saw his eyes open, then roll back in his head as he fainted again.

When Alex had clawed his way out, they collected the other children and drove to the Collingwood Hospital. There seemed to be no internal injury. Both legs were broken. One break was clean, as the doctor put it. The other leg was shattered.

"Kids have to be watched every minute in there," he said sternly to Sally, who had gone into the examining room with Kent while Alex managed Peter and Savanna. "Haven't they got any warning signs up?"

With Alex, she thought, he would have spoken differently. "That's the way boys are. Turn your back and they're tearing around where they shouldn't be," he would have said.

Her gratitude—to God, whom she did not believe in, and to Alex, whom she did—was so immense that she resented nothing.

It was necessary for Kent to spend the next six months out of school, strung up for the first few weeks in a rented hospital bed. Sally picked up and turned in his school assignments, which he completed in no time. Then he was encouraged to go ahead with Extra Projects. One of these was "Travels and Explorations—Choose Your Country."

"I want to pick somewhere nobody else would pick," he said.

The accident and the convalescence seemed to have changed him. He acted older than his age now, less antic, more serene. And Sally told him something that she had not told to another soul. She told him how she was attracted to remote islands. Not to the Hawaiian Islands or the Canaries or the Hebrides or the Isles of Greece, where everybody wanted to go, but to small or obscure islands that nobody talked about and that were seldom, if ever, visited. Ascension, Tristan da Cunha, Chatham Island and Christmas Island and Desolation Island and the Faeroes. She and Kent began to collect every scrap of information they could find about these places, not allowing themselves to make anything up. And never telling Alex what they were doing.

"He would think we were off our heads," Sally said.

Desolation Island's main boast was of a vegetable, of great antiquity, a unique cabbage. They imagined worship ceremonies for it, costumes, and cabbage parades in its honor.

Sally told her son that, before he was born, she had seen footage on television of the inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha disembarking at Heathrow Airport, having all been evacuated, owing to a great volcanic eruption on their island. How strange they had looked, docile and dignified, like creatures from another century. They must have adjusted to England, more or less, but when the volcano quieted down, a couple of years later, they almost all wanted to go home.

When Kent went back to school,

things changed, of course, but he still seemed mature for his age, patient with Savanna, who had grown venturesome and stubborn, and with Peter, who always burst into the house as if on a gale of calamity. And he was especially courteous to his father, bringing him the paper that he had rescued from Savanna and carefully refolded, pulling out his chair at dinnertime.

"Honor to the man who saved my life," he might say, or "Home is the hero."

He said this rather dramatically, though not at all sarcastically, yet it got on Alex's nerves. Kent got on his nerves, had done so even before the deep-hole drama.

"Cut that out," Alex said, and complained privately to Sally.

"He's saying you must have loved him, because you rescued him."

"Christ, I'd have rescued anybody."

"Don't say that in front of him. Please."

When Kent got to high school, things with his father improved. He chose to focus on science. He picked the hard sciences, not the soft earth sciences, and even this roused no opposition in Alex. The harder the better.

But after six months at college Kent disappeared. People who knew him a little—there did not seem to be anyone who claimed to be a friend—said that he had talked of going to the West Coast. A letter came, just as his parents were deciding to go to the police. He was working at a Canadian Tire in a suburb just north of Toronto. Alex went to see him there, to order him back to college. But Kent refused, said that he was very happy with his job, and was making good money, or soon would be, when he got promoted. Then Sally went to see him, without telling Alex, and found him jolly and ten pounds heavier. He said it was the beer. He had friends now.

"It's a phase," she said to Alex when she confessed the visit. "He wants to get a taste of independence."

"He can get a bellyful of it, as far as I'm concerned."

Kent had not said where he was living, and when she made her next visit to Canadian Tire she was told that he had quit. She was embarrassed—she thought she caught a smirk on the face of the employee who told her—and she did not ask where Kent had gone. She assumed he would get in touch, anyway, as soon as he had settled again.

He did write, three years later. His letter was mailed in Needles, California, but he told them not to bother trying to trace him there—he was only passing through. Like Blanche, he said, and Alex said, "Who the hell is Blanche?"

"Just a joke," Sally said. "It doesn't matter."

Kent did not say where he had been or whether he was working or had formed any connections. He did not apologize for leaving his parents without any information for so long, or ask how they were, or how his brother and sister were. Instead, he wrote pages about his own life. Not the practical side of his life but what he believed he should be doing—what he *was* doing—with it.

"It seems so ridiculous to me," he said, "that a person should be expected to lock themselves into a suit of clothes. I mean, like the suit of clothes of an engineer or doctor or geologist, and then the skin grows over it, over the clothes, I mean, and that person can't ever get them off. When we are given a chance to explore the whole world of inner and outer reality and to live in a way that takes in the spiritual and the physical and the whole range of the beautiful and the terrible available to mankind, that is pain as well as joy and turmoil. This way of expressing myself may seem over-blown to you, but one thing I have learned to give up is intellectual pridefulness—"

"He's on drugs," Alex said. "You can tell a mile off. His brain's rotted with drugs."

In the middle of the night he said, "Sex."

Sally was lying beside him, wide awake.

"What about sex?"

"It's what makes you do what he's talking about—become a something-or-other so that you can earn a living. So that you can pay for your steady sex and the consequences. That's not a consideration for him."

Sally said, "My, how romantic."

"Getting down to basics is never very romantic. He's not normal is all I'm trying to say."

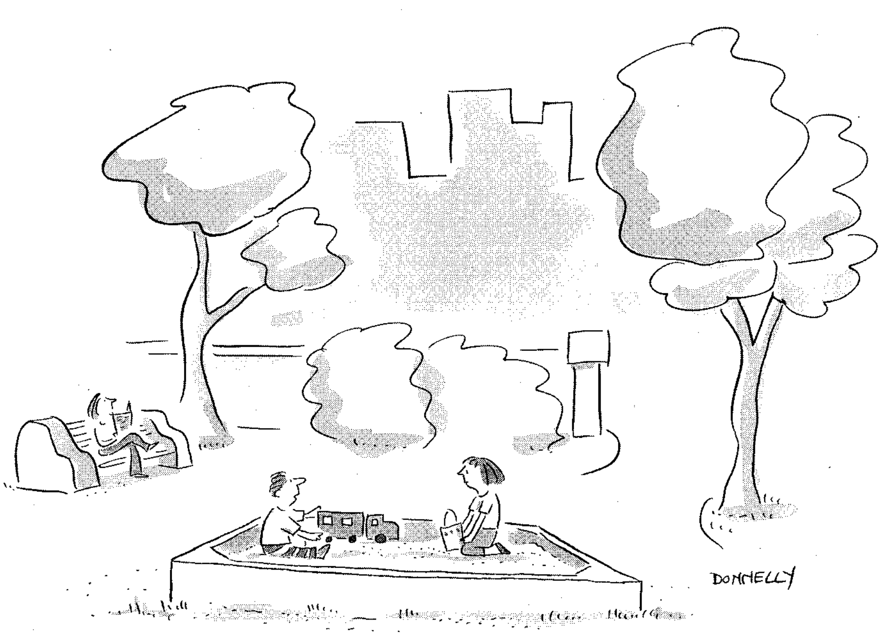
Further on in the letter—or the rampage, as Alex called it—Kent said that he had been luckier than most people, in having had what he called his "near-death experience," which had given him perhaps an extra awareness, and he would be forever grateful to his father, who had lifted him back into the world, and to his mother, who had lovingly received him there.

He wrote, "Perhaps in those moments I was reborn."

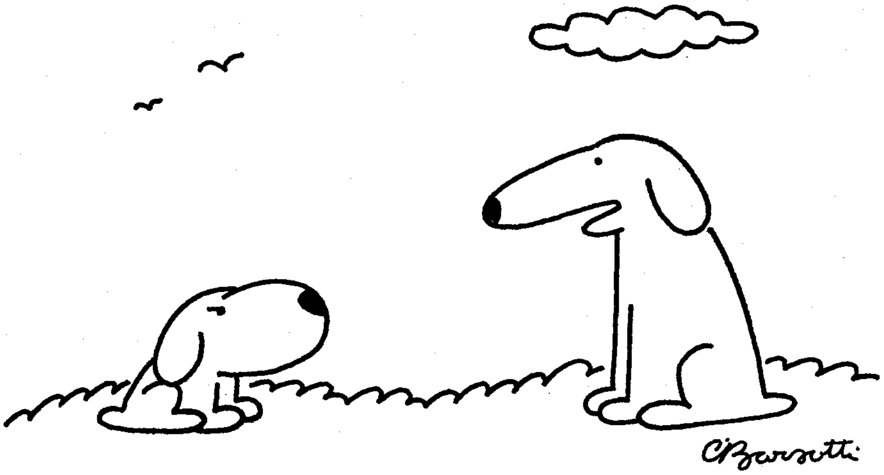
Alex groaned.

"No. I won't say it."

"Don't," Sally said. "You don't mean it."



"I don't see liking trucks as a boy thing. I see it as a liking-trucks thing."



"Fetch is not selling out."

"I don't know whether I do or not."

That letter, signed with love, was the last they heard from him.

Peter went into medicine, Savanna into law.

To her own surprise, Sally became interested in geology. One night, in a trusting mood after sex, she told Alex about the islands—though not about her fantasy that Kent was now living on one or another of them. She said that she had forgotten many of the details she used to know, and that she should look all these places up in the encyclopedia, where she had first got her information. Alex said that everything she wanted to know could probably be found on the Internet now. Surely not something so obscure, she said, and he got her out of bed and downstairs, and there in no time, before her eyes, was Tristan da Cunha, a green plate in the South Atlantic Ocean, with information galore. She was shocked and turned away, and Alex, who was disappointed in her, asked why.

"I don't know. Maybe I don't want it so real."

He said that she needed something to do. He had just retired from teaching at the time and was planning to write a book. He needed an assistant and he could not call on graduate students now as he had been able to when he was still on the faculty. (She didn't know if this was true or not.) She reminded him that she knew nothing about rocks, and he said never mind that, he could use her for scale, in the photographs. So she became the small figure in black or bright clothing, contrasting with the ribbons of Silurian or Devonian rock or with the gneiss formed by intense compression, folded and deformed by clashes of the North American and the Pacific plates to make the present continent. Gradually she learned to use her eyes and apply her knowledge, till she could stand in an empty suburban street and realize that far beneath her shoes was a crater filled with rubble that had never been seen, because there had been no eyes to see it at its creation or through the long history of its being made and filled and hidden and lost. Alex did such things the honor of knowing about them, and she admired him for that, although she knew enough not to say so. They were good friends in these last years, which she didn't know were their last years. He went into the hospital for an operation, taking his charts and photographs with him, and on the day he was supposed to come home he died.

This was in the summer, and that fall there was a dramatic fire in Toronto. Sally sat in front of her television watching coverage of the fire for a while. It was in a district that she knew, or used to know, in the days when its nineteenth-century buildings were inhabited by hippies, with their tarot cards and beads and paper flowers the size of pumpkins. Later, the vegetarian restaurants had been transformed into expensive bistros and boutiques. Now a block of those nineteenth-century buildings was being wiped out, and the newsman was bemoaning this, speaking of the people who lived in old-fashioned apartments above the shops and had now lost their homes or were being dragged out of harm's way onto the street.

He didn't mention the landlords of the buildings, Sally thought, who were probably getting away with substandard wiring, as well as with epidemics of cockroaches, bedbugs, not to be complained about by the deluded or the fearful poor.

She sometimes felt Alex talking in her head these days, and that was surely what was happening now. She turned off the television.

No more than ten minutes later, the phone rang. It was Savanna.

"Mom. Have you got your TV on? Did you see?"

"You mean the fire? I did have it on, but I turned it off."

"No. Did you see—I'm looking for him right now—I saw him not five minutes ago. . . . Mom, it's Kent. Now I can't find him. But I saw him."

"Is he hurt? I'm turning it on now. Was he hurt?"

"No, he was helping. He was carrying one end of a stretcher. There was a body on it—I don't know if it was dead or just hurt. But Kent. It was him. You could even see him limping. Have you got it on now?"

"Yes."

"O.K. I'll calm down. I bet he went back into the building."

"But surely they wouldn't allow—"

"He could be a doctor, for all we know. Oh, fuck, now they're talking to that same old guy they talked to before—his family owned some business for a hundred years. Let's hang up and just keep our eyes on the screen. He's sure to come in range again."

He didn't. The footage began to repeat itself.

Savanna phoned back. "I'm going to get to the bottom of this. I know a guy that works on the news. I can get to see that shot again. We have to find out."

Savanna had never known her brother very well—she had been nine when he left—so what was all the fuss about? Had her father's death made her feel the need of family? She should marry soon, Sally thought. She should have children. But she had such a stubborn streak when she set her mind on something. Her father had told her when she was ten years old that she could gnaw an idea to the bone—she ought to be a lawyer. And, from then on, that was what she had said she would be.

It was Kent, and within a week Savanna had found out all about him. No. Change that to found out all he wanted her to know. He had been living in Toronto for years. He had often passed the building where Savanna worked and thought he had spotted her a couple of times on the street. Of course, she wouldn't have recognized him, because he was wearing a kind of robe.

"A Hare Krishna?" Sally said.

"Oh, Mom, if you're a monk it doesn't mean you're a Hare Krishna. Anyway, he's not that now."

"So what is he?"

"He says he lives in the present. So I said, 'Well, don't we all, nowadays,' and he said no, he meant in the *real* present."

"Where we are now," he had said, and Savanna had said, "You mean, in this dump?" Because it was—the coffee shop where he had asked her to meet him was a dump.

"I see it differently," he said, but then he said he had no objection to her way of seeing it, or anybody else's.

"Well, that's big of you," Savanna said, but she made a joke of it and he sort of laughed.

He said that he had seen Alex's obituary in the paper and thought it was well done. He guessed Alex would have liked the reference to his contribution to geology. He had wondered if his own name would appear on the list of relatives, and he was rather surprised that it was there. Had his father told them what names he wanted listed, before he died? he asked.

Savanna had said no—he hadn't been planning on dying anything like so soon. It was the rest of the family who'd had a conference and decided that Kent's name should be included.

"Not Dad," Kent had said. "Well, no."

Then he had asked about Sally.

Sally felt a kind of inflated balloon in her chest.

"What did you say?"

"I said you were O.K., maybe at loose ends a little, you and Dad being so close and you not having much time yet to get used to being alone. Then he said, 'Tell her she can come to see me, if she wants to,' and I said I would ask you."

Sally didn't reply.

"You there, Mom?"

"Did he say when or where?"

"No. I'm supposed to meet him in a week in the same place and tell him what you said. I think he sort of enjoys calling the shots. I thought you'd agree right away."

"Of course I agree. Did he really risk his life in the fire?"

"He won't talk about it. But my information is yes. He's quite well known, as it turns out, in certain parts of town and by certain people."

Sally received a note. This in itself was special, since most people she knew used e-mail or the phone. She was glad he hadn't called. She did not yet trust herself to hear his voice. The note instructed her to leave her car in the subway parking lot at the end of the line and take the subway to a specified station, where he would meet her.

She expected to see him on the other side of the turnstile, but he was not there. Probably he had meant that he would meet her outside. She climbed the steps and emerged into the sunlight and paused, as people hurried and pushed past her. She had a feeling of dismay and embarrassment. Dismay at Kent's apparent absence and embarrassment because she was feeling just what people from her part of the country often felt in neighborhoods like this, though she would never have said what they said. *You'd think you were in the Congo or India or Vietnam.*

On the steps of an old bank building just beyond the subway entrance, several men were sitting or lounging or sleeping. It was no longer a bank, of course, though the bank's name was cut into the stone. She looked at the name rather than at the men, whose slouching or reclining postures were such a contrast to the old purpose of the building and the rush of the crowd coming out of the subway.

"Mom."

One of the men on the steps got up and came toward her in no hurry, with a slight drag of one foot, and she realized that it was Kent and waited for him.

She would almost as soon have run away. But then she saw that not all the men were filthy or hopeless-looking, and that some glanced at her without menace or contempt and even with friendly amusement, now that she had been identified as Kent's mother.

Kent didn't wear a robe. He wore gray pants that were too big for him, a T-shirt with no message on it, and a threadbare jacket. His hair was cut so short you could hardly see the curl. His skin was quite pale, and his thin body made him look older than he was. He was missing some teeth.

He did not embrace her—she did not expect him to—but he put his hand lightly on her back to steer her in the direction he wanted her to go.

"Do you still smoke your pipe?" she said, sniffing the air, and remembering how he had taken up pipe smoking in high school.

"Pipe? Oh. No. It's the smoke from the fire you smell. We don't notice it anymore. I'm afraid it'll get stronger, where we're walking."

"Are we going to go through where it was?"

"No, no. We couldn't, even if we wanted to. They've got it all blocked off. Too dangerous. Some buildings will have to be taken down. Don't worry—it's O.K. where we are. A good block and a half away from the mess."

"Your apartment building?" she said, alert to the "we."

"Sort of. Yes. You'll see."

He spoke gently, readily, yet with an effort, like someone speaking, as a courtesy, in a foreign language. And he stooped a little, to make sure she heard him. The slight labor involved in speaking to her seemed something she was meant to notice. The cost.

As they stepped off a curb he brushed her arm—perhaps he had stumbled a little—and he said, "Excuse me." And she thought he gave a slight shiver.

AIDS. Why had that never occurred to her before?

"No," he said, though she had certainly not spoken aloud. "I'm quite well at present. I'm not H.I.V.-positive or anything like that. I contracted malaria years ago but it's under control. I may be a bit rundown but nothing to worry about. We turn here—we're right on this block."

We.

"I'm not psychic," he said. "I just figured out something that Savanna was trying to get at, and I thought I'd put you at rest. Here we are then."

It was one of those houses whose front doors are only a few steps from the sidewalk.

"I'm celibate, actually," he said, holding open the door. A piece of cardboard was tacked up where one of its glass panes should be.

The floorboards were bare and creaked underfoot. The smell was complicated, all-pervasive. The smoke had got in here, of course, but it was mixed with the odors of ancient cooking, burned coffee, toilets, sickness, decay.

"Though 'celibate' might be the wrong word. That sounds as if it had something to do with will power. I guess I should have said 'neuter.' I don't think of it as an achievement. It isn't."

He was leading her around the stairs and into the kitchen.

And there a gigantic woman stood with her back to them, stirring something on the stove.

Kent said, "Hi, Marnie. This is my mom. Can you say hello to my mom?"

Sally noticed a change in his voice. A relaxation, honesty, perhaps a respectfulness, that was different from the forced lightness he adopted with her.

She said, "Hello, Marnie," and the woman half turned, showing a squeezed doll's face in a loaf of flesh but not focussing her eyes.

"Marnie is our cook this week," Kent said. "Smells O.K., Marnie."

To his mother he said, "We'll go and sit in my sanctum, shall we?" and led the way down a couple of steps and along a back hall. It was hard to move there, because of the stacks of newspapers, flyers, and magazines neatly tied.

"Got to get these out of here," Kent said. "I told Steve this morning. Fire hazard. Jeez, I used to just say that. Now I know what it means."

Jeez. She had been wondering if he belonged to some plainclothes religious order, but if he did he surely wouldn't say that, would he? Of course, it could be an order of some faith other than Christian.

His room was down some more steps, actually in the cellar. There was a cot, a battered old-fashioned desk with cubbyholes, a couple of straight-backed chairs with rungs missing.

"The chairs are perfectly safe," he said. "Nearly all our stuff is scavenged from somewhere, but I draw the line at chairs you can't sit on."

Sally seated herself with a feeling of exhaustion.

"What are you?" she said. "What is it that you do? Is this a halfway house or something like that?"

"No. Not even quarter-way. We take in anybody that comes."

"Even me."

"Even you," he said without smiling. "We aren't supported by anybody but ourselves. We do some recycling with stuff we pick up. Those newspapers. Bottles. We make a bit here and there. And we take turns soliciting the public."

"Asking for charity?"

"Begging," he said.

"On the street?"

"What better place for it? On the street. And we go into some pubs that we have an understanding with, though it is against the law."

"You do that yourself?"

"I could hardly ask the others to do it if I wouldn't. That's something I had to overcome. Just about all of us have something to overcome. It can be shame. Or it can be the concept of 'mine.' When somebody drops a ten-dollar bill, or even a loonie, into the hat, that's when the notion of private ownership kicks in. Whose is it, huh? Ours or—unh-uh—mine? If the answer comes back 'mine,' it usually gets spent right away, and we have the person turning up here smelling of booze and saying, 'I don't know what's the matter with me today—I couldn't get a bite.' Then they might start to feel bad later and confess. Or not confess, never mind. We see them disappear for days—weeks—then show up back here when the going gets too rough. And sometimes we'll see them working the street on their own, never letting on that they recognize us. Never coming back. And that's all right, too. They're our graduates, you could say. If you believe in the system."

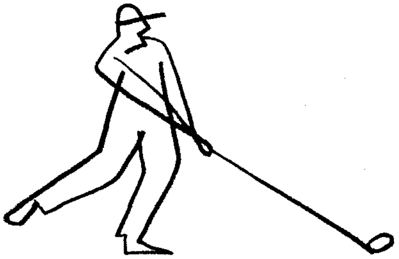
"Kent—"

"Around here I'm Jonah."

"Jonah?"

"I just chose it. I thought of Lazarus, but it's too self-dramatizing. You can call me Kent, if you like."

"I want to know what's happened in your life. I mean, not so much these people—"



"These people are my life."

"I knew you'd say that."

"O.K., it was kind of smart-arse. But this, this is what I've been doing for—seven years? Nine years? Nine years."

She persisted. "Before that?"

"What do I know? Before that? Before that. Man's days are like grass, eh? Cut down and put into the oven. Listen to me. Soon as I meet you again I start the showing-off. Cut down and put in the oven—I'm not interested in that. I live each day as it happens. Really. You wouldn't understand that. I'm not in your world, you're not in mine. You know why I wanted to meet you here today?"

"No. I didn't think of it. I mean, I thought naturally maybe the time had come—"

"Naturally. When I read about my father's death in the paper I thought, Well, where is the money? I thought, Well, she can tell me."

"It went to me," Sally said, with flat disappointment but great self-control. "For the time being. The house as well, if you're interested."

"I thought likely that was it. That's O.K."

"When I die, to Peter and his boys and Savanna."

"Very nice."

"He didn't know if you were alive or dead."

"You think I'm asking for myself? You think I'm that much of an idiot to want the money for myself? But I did make a mistake thinking about how I could use it. Thinking, Family money, sure, I can use that. That's the temptation. Now I'm glad, I'm glad I can't have it."

"I could let—"

"The thing is, though, this place is condemned—"

"I could let you borrow."

"Borrow? We don't borrow around here. We don't use the borrow system around here. Excuse me, I've got to go get hold of my mood. Are you hungry? Would you like some soup?"

"No, thanks."

When he was gone, she thought of running away. If she could locate a back door, a route that didn't go through the kitchen.

But she could not do it. It would mean that she would never see him again. And the back yard of a house like this, built before the days of automobiles, would have no access to the street.

It was half an hour before he came back. He seemed a little surprised or bewildered to find her still there.

"Sorry. I had to settle some business. And then I talked to Marnie. She always calms me down."

"You wrote a letter to us," Sally said. "It was the last we heard from you."

"Oh, don't remind me."

"No, it was a good letter. It was a good attempt to explain what you were thinking."

"Please. Don't remind me."

"You were trying to figure out your life—"

"My life, my life, my progress, what all I could discover about my stinking self. The purpose of me. My crap. My spirituality. My intellectuality. There isn't any inside stuff anymore, Sally. You don't mind if I call you Sally? It just comes out easier. There is only outside, what you do, every moment of your life. Since I realized this, I've been happy."

"You are? Happy?"

"Sure. I've let go of that stupid self stuff. I think, How can I help? And that's all the thinking that I allow myself."

"Living in the present?"

"I don't care if you think I'm banal. I don't care if you laugh at me."

"I'm not—"

"I don't care. Listen. If you think I'm after your money, fine. I *am* after your money. Also, I am after you. Don't you want a different life? I'm not saying I love you. I don't use stupid language. Or, I want to save you. You know you can only save yourself. So what is the point? I don't usually try to get anywhere talking to people. I usually try to avoid personal relationships. I mean I do. I do avoid them."

Relationships.

"Why are you trying not to smile?" he said. "Because I said 'relationships'? That's a cant word? I don't fuss about my words."

Sally said, "I was thinking of Jesus. 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' "

The look that leaped to his face was almost savage.

"Don't you get tired, Sally? Don't you get tired being clever? I can't go on talking this way, I'm sorry. I've got things to do."

"So have I," Sally said. It was a complete lie. "We'll be—"

"Don't say it. Don't say we'll be in touch."

"Maybe we'll be in touch. Is that any better?"

Sally gets lost, then finds her way. The bank building again, the same or possibly a whole new regiment of loiterers. The subway ride, the car park, the keys, the highway, the traffic. Then the lesser highway, the early sunset, no snow yet, the bare trees, and the darkening fields.

She loves this countryside, this time of year. Must she now think herself unworthy?

The cat is glad to see her. There are a couple of messages from friends on her machine. She heats up a single serving of lasagna. She buys these separated, precooked, and frozen portions now. They are quite good and not too expensive when you think that there's no waste. She sips from a glass of wine during the few-minute wait.

She is shaking with anger. What is she supposed to do, go back to the condemned house and scrub the rotten linoleum and cook up the chicken parts that were thrown out because they're past the best-before date? And be reminded every day of how she falls short of Marnie or any other afflicted creature? All for the privilege of being useful in the life that somebody else—Kent—has chosen?

He's sick. He's wearing himself out; maybe he's dying. He wouldn't thank her for clean sheets and fresh food. Oh, no. He'd rather die on that cot under a blanket with a burned hole in it.

But a check, she can write some sort of check, not an absurd one. Not too big or too small. He won't help himself with it, of course. He won't stop despising her, of course.

Despising. No. Not the point. Nothing personal.

There is something, anyway, in having got through the day without its being an absolute disaster. It wasn't, was it? She had said "maybe." He hadn't corrected her.

And it was possible, too, that age could become her ally, turning her into somebody she didn't know yet. She has seen that look of old people, now and then—clear-sighted but content, on islands of their own making. ♦

ADVERTISEMENT

on the **town**

BE THE FIRST TO HEAR ABOUT EVENTS, PROMOTIONS, AND SPECIAL OFFERS FROM *NEW YORKER* ADVERTISERS.

Visit Antarctica aboard the expedition ship National Geographic Explorer. Join Lindblad Expeditions and National Geographic on an exploration of the white continent. Voyages with naturalists, experts, and photographers this winter for 15, 20, or 25 days. Call your travel agent or **1-800-EXPEDITION**.
www.expeditions.com

Lindblad Expeditions NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
EXPLORE WITH EXPERIENCE

Ships registry: Bahamas

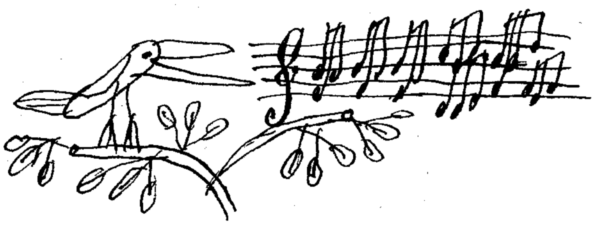
THEATERMANIA
Up-to-date reviews, news and tickets
Broadway • Off-Broadway • Nationwide
Over 750,000 members enjoy our theater discounts and special offers.
JOIN FOR FREE and you may win tickets to a hit show!
visit **www.TheaterMania.com**

TIMESHARES 60-80% off Retail!
★ ***Best Resorts, Prices &Weeks***
★ ***500+ Worldwide Resorts!***
★ ***Call For FREE Catalog***
Buy Direct! (800) 348-0094
holidaygroup.com/save

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK NOW
Leading subsidy book publisher seeks manuscripts. Fiction, non-fiction, poetry, juvenile, religious, etc. New authors welcomed. For free 32-page illustrated guidebook **TD-70, call 1-800-821-3990 or write to: Vantage Press, 419 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016**
www.vantagepress.com

MAESTRO CLASSICS
London Philharmonic Orchestra
Stephen Simon, conductor
award-winning classical music CDs for kids
(866) 432-7624
www.MaestroClassics.com

THE CRITICS



BOOKS

TIANANMEN'S WAKE

A novel of hope and cynicism.

BY PANKAJ MISHRA

It is still not clear how many unarmed civilians the People's Liberation Army (P.L.A.) killed in Beijing on the night of June 3, 1989, as it sought to expel protestors from Tiananmen Square. The names of the victims, who were officially denounced as "counter-revolutionaries," were never published. Their relatives are forbidden from mourning them in public. On every anniversary of the massacre, policemen proliferate in the square, quick to extinguish any attempt at honoring the dead and wounded. The massacre cannot even be mentioned in the Chinese media.

This attempt to engineer collective amnesia seems to have worked: some students at Beijing University recently failed to identify the iconic Tiananmen photograph of the young man with the plastic bags confronting tanks. Once famous student leaders—Chai Ling, Li Lu, Wang Dan, Shen Tong, Wu'er Kaixi—went into exile, and several transformed themselves into venture capitalists and hedge funders. To the Chinese, who have been released with miraculous swiftness from the deprivations and traumas of the Mao years into hectic consumerism, struggles for democracy waged in the late nineteen-seventies and eighties seem increasingly remote. As Dai Wei, the comatose but mordantly alert narrator of "Beijing Coma," the new novel by Ma Jian (translated from the Chinese by Flora Drew; Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $27.50), observes, "No one talks about the Tiananmen protests any more."

Ma Jian, a former resident of Beijing who was at the Tiananmen protests, now lives in self-imposed exile in London. His narrator, who lingers in a coma for years after being shot in the neck by a stray bullet during the P.L.A.'s crackdown, gives a remarkably detailed, and often only thinly fictionalized, account of the events and their brisk disappearance from Chinese memory. "The struggle of man against power," Milan Kundera once wrote against a similar backdrop of Communist indoctrination, "is the struggle of memory against forgetting"; and, at nearly six hundred closely printed pages, "Beijing Coma" seems determined to enshrine the strivings of "the Tiananmen Generation."

Ma Jian writes about China with the obsessiveness of a writer in exile who cares about only one society. There is no doubting his passion and sense of urgency. "We've been crushed and silenced," says a colleague of Dai Wei's whose legs are trampled under a P.L.A. tank. "If we don't take a stand now, we will be erased from the history books." Dai Wei, whose inner life is periodically stimulated by visitors to his sickbed, notes each new diversion—cell phones, e-mail, video disks, anti-Western nationalism, New Age religion, the Olympics—that beguiles his countrymen away from the idealism of 1989. "As society changes, new words and terms keep popping up, such as: sauna, private car ownership, property developer, mortgage and personal instalment loan," he notes. He watches helplessly as his own decaying body is commodified, his urine used in quack therapy, and his still responsive penis employed by seekers of kinky sex. His hapless mother resorts to selling one of his kidneys to pay for his treatment. Finally, a real-estate developer from Hong Kong demolishes his cramped home during Beijing's pre-Olympic prettification. In the novel's Wagnerian finale, the bulldozers of the hustling new China and the tanks of the P.L.A. combine in a frenzy of violence and destruction.

Philip Roth once contrasted, slightly enviously, the American writer, who can say anything he wishes but is usually ignored, with his Eastern Bloc counterpart, who, since nothing is permitted to him, receives respectful attention for everything he writes. China—garishly capitalist but still officially Communist—seems to impose its own peculiar ordeal on writers; they risk the state's malevolence without exercising any great moral or political influence in their easily distracted society. "Beijing Coma" is unlikely to be published on the Chinese mainland (though editions printed in Hong Kong and Taiwan will probably be pirated there), and will be read mostly by readers outside China.

Some of its more pungent criticisms are likely to be lost on the non-Chinese reader. To Westerners, the students at Tiananmen may have given an impression of a solid and energetic consensus against dictatorship and for democracy, but they were an egotistical and fractious lot, riven by disagreements over tactics and money. These schisms widened during the years of exile as leaders blamed each other for the failure of the protests. Ma Jian retraces these recriminations over hundreds of pages, closely (and controversially) approximating actual events and real-life personalities. Nailing down the differences between the respective stances of the Hunger Strike Headquarters, the Beijing Students' Federation, and the Provincial Students' Federation is as important to him as evoking the scent of Dai Wei's girlfriends.

The novel's style feels more familiar when, following much dissident literature from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, it mixes gritty realism with absurdist satire. In one memorable scene, Dai Wei is fellated by a horny visitor

ABOVE: BENOÎT JACQUES; OPPOSITE: CATHERINE HENRIETTE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

To Westerners, the students at Tiananmen seemed united, but Ma Jian's novel portrays them as egotistical and fractious.

while the new nationalists of Beijing lustily celebrate Hong Kong's return to the Chinese motherland. Writers in Communist countries inevitably focus on what Ivan Klíma once called the "intriguing plots offered by the totalitarian system"—"the humiliation of man, life based on lies and pretenses"—and State repression and terror also tend to distill the writer's art, giving it a metaphysical rather than a material heft, a poetic rather than a literalist cast. While most of "Beijing Coma" renders the protests against Communist rule with the doggedness and precision of ordinary social realism, shorter sections of the novel, describing Dai Wei's regrets and desires with ironic nostalgia, recall the ambitious collages in which Kundera and Klíma frictionlessly juxtaposed political commentary, erotic memories, and philosophical reflections. Readers of Kundera and Josef Škvorecký would recognize the novel's frequent invocation of sexual love as an antidote to totalitarian control, and Ma Jian shares an affinity for the artistically gifted and the emotionally vulnerable, and for social outcasts. Immersed in his memories, Dai Wei brings to mind the protagonist of Klíma's "Love and Garbage," a banned writer "hemmed in by prohibition" who wants to escape into a "private region of bliss."

Born in 1953, Ma Jian is one of the Chinese artists and intellectuals who came of age in the last years of the Cultural Revolution. Exempt from personal participation in the worst excesses of Maoism, this generation, which includes China's best-known filmmakers, Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou, as well as the artist Ai Weiwei, was the first to dare embrace the possibilities of artistic maneuver in China's unruly transition from the "struggle session" to the free market. As the Communist Party, adopting a market economy, shed some of its ideological orthodoxy, anything seemed possible—at least, until the next crackdown.

Ma Jian seems to have hovered on the raffish end of the new countercultural spectrum—what the Sinologist John Minford termed the "culture of the *liumang* (an untranslatable term loosely meaning loafer, hoodlum, hobo, bum, punk)." Divorced from his first wife and abandoned by his girlfriend, Ma Jian feigned illness at work and hung out with other misfits, drinking beer and discussing "Waiting for Godot." Accused of "spiritual pollution" by the authorities, he left Beijing in late 1983 and, travelling with a camera, a notebook, and Whitman's "Leaves of Grass," wandered around China for three years, subsisting on odd jobs and the kindness of friends and strangers. The commissars caught up with him in 1987, when, having just moved to Hong Kong, he published a story based on his travels in Tibet. The story, describing the degradation of China's most religious minority, apparently spurned socialist realism's demand for cheerful uplift, and it earned Ma Jian a blanket ban on publication in China.

On his travels across China in the mid-eighties, which he later described in "Red Dust," the book that made him known in the West, Ma Jian repeatedly chafed at official brutality and philistinism. Speaking to a small-town book club, he proclaimed, "I will not let a political party tell me how to live, when to die or what to believe in." Reciting Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" to a fellow-writer, he mocked Ginsberg's angry rejection of America. "He implies his country is not fit for humans to live in. Well, he should live in China for a month, then see what he thinks. Everyone here dreams of the day we can sing out of our windows in despair."

Tiananmen Square in early 1989 attracted many dreamers like Ma Jian, who returned from Hong Kong to a one-room shack in Beijing in order to join the student protests. The protests initially seemed like a political consummation of the previous decade of cautious economic freedom. China in the mid-eighties had been, as Ma Jian put it, "starting to shake, like a kettle coming to the boil." "Red Dust" remains the most vivid description of the Chinese people freshly liberated from Maoism, picking their way through a transformed moral landscape in which extreme poverty and repression coexist with alluring new possibilities of self-invention. Selling chiffon scarves in a traffic jam in Xuelin or painting cartoons in Chengdu, Ma Jian not only seems to have relished his own improvised life; he also appears to have embraced some of his country's entrepreneurial exuberance. In one of the book's many bracingly unexpected scenes, he finds himself exhorting the residents of an isolated village, "This country is changing, opening up. You can't just stay here like vegetables. You should travel, broaden your minds. Haven't you heard about Shenzhen Economic Zone?"

"Beijing Coma" bathes in the poignant glow of youthful hope and excitement. It was this optimism, more than any coherent political demand or principle, that drove the protests of 1989, even inspiring ordinary workers to organize demonstrations. (Far more numerous than the students, Beijing's protesting civilians prevented the military from reaching Tiananmen Square for days on end; they also formed a large proportion of the casualties on the night of June 3rd.) As Dai Wei puts it, "China had emerged from the catastrophe of the Cultural Revolution, and we were eager to build our country up again. We were fired by a sense of mission." At its best, "Beijing Coma" movingly evokes the bliss many Chinese felt at that dawn to be alive, especially the young for whom the occupation of the square "was like a huge party," with plenty of opportunities for drinking, flirtation, and sex.

The massacre at Tiananmen Square, and the additional shock of its erasure from Chinese memory, seem to have been almost as harshly clarifying for Ma Jian and his peers as the failure of the 1848 revolution in France was for Flaubert and his contemporaries. Not surprisingly, "Beijing Coma" analyzes the protests almost as fiercely as it condemns the suppressors; the student leaders, like the 1848 revolutionaries in Flaubert's "Sentimental Education," come across as governed by self-interest and vanity. "What was wrong with our generation?" Dai Wei says. "When the guns were pointing at our heads, we were still wasting time squabbling among ourselves." One of the protestors tells a student leader, "You're supposed to be fighting dictatorship, but deep down you all want to be little emperors." Dai Wei's girlfriend, who is one of the most passionate demonstrators, believes that the leaders "all want to run away to graduate school in America, they have no ideals."

Ma Jian's political anguish gives "Beijing Coma" a sour tang. Much of its prose transcends its utilitarian purpose only when, while evoking Dai Wei's loves and his austere childhood, Ma Jian summons up some of the offhand lyricism of "Red Dust": "I picture the dusty string of garlic hanging from a peg on the kitchen door; my father squatting down beside a washbowl, rubbing his bare legs with a wet cloth; a swathe of fallen bicycles sparkling in the sun like a field of wheat."

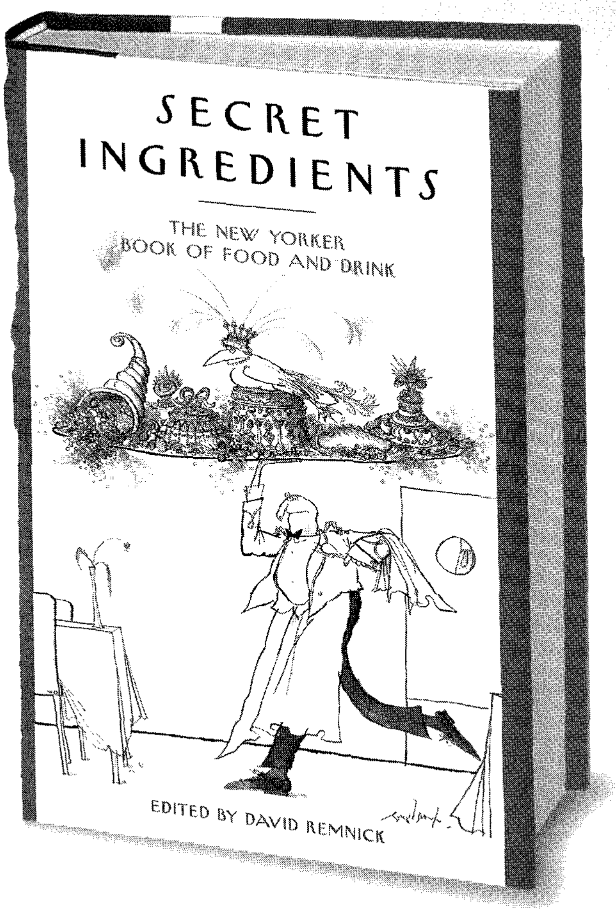
The novel's bitterness apparently derives not only from the futility of the Tiananmen protests and the abominations of the Cultural Revolution—Ma Jian uses research that raises the possibility of cannibalism among Red Guards in Guangxi—but also from what he sees as an older Chinese tendency toward autocratic cruelty, submission, and conformity. In 1997, Ai Weiwei, who is now one of China's most famous artists, published an image of Tiananmen Square with his upraised middle finger in the foreground. In an accompanying essay, he asserted that "the history of modern China is a history of negation, a denial of the value of humanity, a murder of individuality. It is a history without a soul." Ma Jian seems to concur. "What a gruesome history China has," a foreign visitor to the Forbidden City remarks in "Beijing Coma." "That's why we've occupied the square," Dai Wei's girlfriend replies. "We want to put an end to millennia of autocratic rule."

Reflecting on the murderous suppression of the protests, Dai Wei concludes that "we were courageous but inexperienced, and had little understanding of Chinese history." As the bulldozers move closer to his home, and his friends and relatives abandon him, a sparrow—the humble bird once marked for extermination by Mao Zedong—becomes his constant companion. His slow decay, attended by the depredations of post-Tiananmen China, turns out to be the most accomplished part of "Beijing Coma"; the eerie fascination of an active mind inside an inert body easily compensates for the conventional consolations of plot and drama.

ADVERTISEMENT

FROM
THE NEW YORKER
A FEAST OF DELICIOUS WRITING
N FOOD AND DRINK, SEASONED
WITH A GENEROUS DASH
OF CARTOONS.

Selected from the magazine's
plentiful larder, *Secret Ingredients*
elebrates all forms of gustatory delight:
humor pieces • cartoons •
lassic profiles of great chefs and great
eaters • memoirs • short stories •
poems • offerings from every
age of THE NEW YORKER's
eighty-year history



N SALE NOW IN HARDCOVER

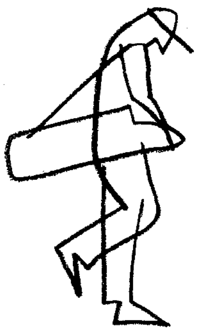
NDOM HOUSE | www.secretingredientsbook.com

BRIEFLY NOTED

Steven M. Gillon (Oxford;
e story of how Bill Clin-
t Gingrich came close to
ng a deal on Social Secu-
g out their respective po-
nly to be derailed by Clin-
ering (and, to an extent, by
is far from edifying. Gil-
or and a History Channel
wed both men, but he had
to Gingrich, and it shows.
isibly, that his subjects had
common than one would
n points to their difficult
d love of technology, but
across most strongly is a
of self-aggrandizement.
, sheathed in a rote cul-
of the sixties, never really
e pettiest logic of the Belt-
er various policy initia-
oints"—so that the final,
ced collapse of the initia-
y as poignant as a triumph
over cynicism can be.

tain, *by David Kynaston*
. Drawing on a remark-
diaries, letters, mem-
veys, Kynaston assem-
onic history of a pivotal
1945, Winston Churchill
m office in an electoral
wartime lead-
dy overshad-
nestic worries
ousing—seven
fifty thousand
been damaged
nd six million
toilets. Kynas-
of the six years
vernment that
ds as much to
en grim, with rationing
-as to the top-down re-
at included the creation
l Health Service and the
of swaths of British in-
t for such planning was
ven the arch-establish-
London in favor of the
t always deep, and Kyn-
zes the British people's complex feelings about the policies undertaken in their name.

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle, *by David Wroblewski (Ecco; $25.95).* Set in rural nineteen-seventies Wisconsin, this loose retelling of Hamlet focusses on Edgar, a boy born mute and with a preternatural ability to commune with the dogs whose breeding and training is his family's business. Idyllic routine is threatened when Edgar's ne'er-do-well uncle comes to live with the family, and the menace persists even after his sudden departure. Soon afterward, Edgar's father dies of an apparent aneurysm; Edgar becomes convinced, but can't prove, that his uncle—who soon inserts himself back into the family—is to blame. In this début novel, Wroblewski illustrates the relationship between man and canine (at times, from the dog's point of view) in a way that is both lyrical and unsentimental, and demonstrates an ability to create a coherent, captivating fictional world in which even supernatural elements feel entirely persuasive.



Personal Days, *by Ed Park (Random House; $13).* This comic and creepy début novel takes place in a Manhattan office depopulated by "the Firings," where one can "wander vast tracts of lunar workscape before seeing a window." The downsized staff huddle like the crew of a doomed spaceship, picked off one by one by an invisible predator. Crippled by computer crashes (one worker suggests that the machines are "trying to tell us about the limits of the human"), the survivors eddy in a spiritual inertia; when one of them is banished to "Siberia"—a lone desk on another floor—no one can muster the energy even to reply to her increasingly anguished e-mails, until, one day, she is simply no longer there. Park transforms the banal into the eerie, rendering ominous the familiar request "Does anyone want anything from the outside world?"

THE SKY LINE

FORBIDDEN CITIES

Beijing's great new architecture is a mixed blessing for the city.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

The city planner Edmund Bacon once described Beijing as "possibly the greatest single work of man on the face of the earth." When he was there, in the nineteen-thirties, you could still see that the city, from the walls surrounding it to the emperor's Forbidden City at its heart, was conceived as a totality—a work of monumental geometry, symmetrical and precise. Even the *hutongs*, the warrenlike neighborhoods of small courtyard houses set along alleyways, which made up the bulk of the city's urban fabric, were as essential to Beijing as the temples and the imperial compound, which has the same intricate mixture of courtyards and lanes. Bejing was all of a piece.

It couldn't last forever, and it didn't. Mao Zedong tried to change Beijing into an industrial and governmental center, putting up factories and ponderous administrative buildings. But now Mao's Beijing is nearly as much a part of the past as the Forbidden City. The factories are being pushed to the outskirts, and in their place the city has developed a skyline. It isn't like the height-obsessed skyline of Shanghai, or the tight, congested skyline of Hong Kong. In Beijing, the towers are sprinkled all over the place. Most of them are mediocre, and some are ridiculous—a few have pagodalike crowns, to satisfy a former mayor who insisted that new buildings appear Chinese—but a handful are among the most compelling buildings going up anywhere in the world. In Beijing, the latest trend is architecture that will force the world to pay attention, and the result is a striking, unmistakably twenty-first-century city, combining explosive, relentless development with a fondness for the avant-garde. Beijing is as ruthlessly unsentimental today as it was in Mao's time, with little patience for history if it gets in the way of development, and yet the city doesn't feel as if it were defined solely by growth, like Shanghai, or like the kind of entirely manufactured environment that you see in Dubai. When I visited Beijing recently, the architect Ole Scheeren said to me, "I think Beijing is incredibly strong in its ability to completely override its own history and yet not surrender its identity."

Scheeren is the co-architect, with Rem Koolhaas, of the most eagerly awaited building in Beijing, the headquarters of the Chinese television network CCTV, a monumental construction that has become world-famous long in advance of its completion, scheduled for late this year. A vast structure of steel and glass, it is a dazzling reinvention of the skyscraper, using size not to dominate but to embrace the viewer. The building will contain more office space than any other building in China and nearly as much as the Pentagon, but, as skyscrapers go, it is on the short side, with just fifty-one floors. Looking from a distance like a gigantic arch, it is a continuous loop, a kind of square doughnut. Two vertical sections, which contain offices, lean precariously inward, connected by two horizontal sections containing production facilities, one running along the ground, the other a kind of bridge in the sky. When you get closer, you see that each horizontal section is made up of two pieces that converge in a right angle. The top section, thirteen stories deep, is dramatically cantilevered out over open space, five hundred and thirty feet in the air, and it seems to reach over you like a benign robot. The novelty of the form—some Beijingers have taken to calling it Big Shorts—takes time to comprehend; the building seems to change as you pass it. "It comes across sometimes as big and sometimes as small, and from some angles it is strong and from others weak," Scheeren said. "It no longer portrays a single image."

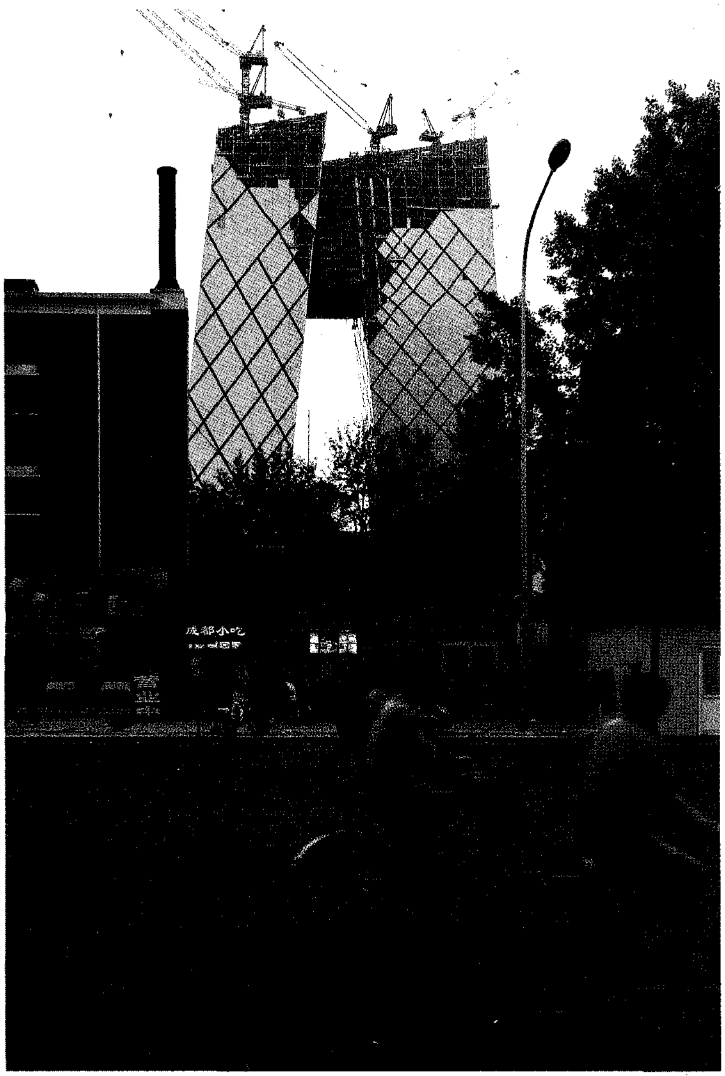
You might think that, like a good deal of Koolhaas's work, the building is as much showmanship as architecture, but it evinces a quiet, monumental grandeur. Some of that is due to the color of the glass, which is a soft gray, almost perfectly echoing the overcast Beijing sky. Around the glass, the diagonal grid of the building's steel framework is visible, the lines getting denser in the cantilever, where the structural stresses are more extreme. Scheeren told me, "I had the fantasy that the façade would disappear against the gray sky and you would be left with only the black grid."

Like the CCTV building, a new development designed by the New York architect Steven Holl—a cluster of linked apartment buildings—displays a boldness that would be unlikely to escape compromise in a Western city. And, like the CCTV building, its most notable feature is a bridge—or, rather, bridges—high in the air. Holl has built eight squarish towers and one round one (which will contain a hotel), each about twenty stories tall. The residential towers have identical aluminum façades in a grid pattern, with square windows set back and edged in bright colors that Holl says he took from Buddhist temples. Holl placed the towers in a ring around the property, connecting them with glass-enclosed bridges at various heights—a kind of public, or semi-public, street in the sky running all the way around the complex. Some bridges start on one floor and end on another, so that you walk up or down a ramp—a hill in the sky. Each bridge contains some facility that the tenants share—a gym, a café, a bookstore. The most eye-catching has a swimming pool, which feels as if it were floating in the air, seventeen stories above Beijing.

The idea of the street high above the city is intended to counteract the sense of isolation that high-rise living usually brings, and to create an incentive for residents to walk around the complex. "In Beijing, to go anywhere means taxis and traffic jams and pollution," Hideki Hirahara, the project architect in Holl's Beijing office, told me as we walked around the site, where construction crews were just beginning to enclose the steel bridges. "We wanted to create all city functions inside the project."

The bridges are spectacular, inside and out, and one can imagine that there will be an allure to walking in the air from tower to tower that having a cup of coffee on the ground can't match. But there's a hitch. This clever prototype for a city without streets is also an admission that the traditional street-based city doesn't have much of a future here. As an attempt to bring avant-garde ideas to high-rise housing, the development is impressive, but at another level it's not unlike the gated apartment compounds that now fill much of Beijing's rapidly developing outskirts. The twenty-first-century equivalent of the ancient *hutongs* is a kind of skyscraper suburbia. You drive there, and then you get back in your car every time you go outside—exactly the model that planners in the United States have been trying to get away from in recent decades.

In this context, it's not surprising that another example of big-ticket Western architecture in Beijing—the National Center for the Performing Arts, by the French architect Paul Andreu—is about as disconnected from the street as possible. It's an ovoid of reflective glass set in an artificial lake and designed to look as if it were floating on water; there isn't even a door, lest the purity of its shape be disturbed. You descend to a sunken plaza beside the pool, walk through a tunnel under the water, and ride up an escalator to find yourself inside the ovoid. There's excitement in being under a huge, curving roof that shelters three different halls, but, in general, the entrance, striving for high drama, comes off as silly and cumbersome. The Chinese refer to the building as the Egg.



The new CCTV building is known by some locals as Big Shorts.

IWAN BAAN

Locals call Beijing *Tan Da Bing*, which means Spreading Pancake. Since 1991, it has gained, on average, nearly three hundred thousand people a year, and by the end of last year it had a population of around seventeen million. Old Beijing—designed for pedestrians and imperial processions but not much in between—has turned out to be a bad framework on which to construct a modern city. It has too few conventional streets, and they are spaced far apart. There aren't many traditional city blocks. In the days when Beijing was famous for swarms of cyclists, its unsuitability for automobiles didn't matter; now that the Chinese have cars, Beijing has gone in one generation from emanating an ancient spirit to feeling like Houston. When I visited three years ago, I thought that its problem was a compulsion to repeat the mistakes of American cities. Now the picture is much less clear. Crowding, pollution, and sprawl still define the city, but the new architecture, far from replicating an American mistake, surpasses what most American cities would be willing, or able, to do. This has an effect on the city's mood: people talk about the new buildings and, whether they approve or not, recognize that such daring constructions would not get built anywhere else.

Beijing is also beginning, slowly, to talk about historic preservation. Wang Jun, a thirty-nine-year-old journalist who was born in southwest China, has become Beijing's Jane Jacobs, an outspoken advocate of old neighborhoods and traditional streets. "When I started to work, it was the period of Beijing's most intensive dismantling," he told me. "I did a lot of investigating, and the city officials were very unhappy, which drove me to more investigating, which made the city officials even more unhappy." Now, Wang says, city officials invite him to meetings they once refused to let him attend, and the city has begun to put money into renovating some *hutongs* that would have been demolished a few years ago.

There are urbanists who think that Wang Jun's position smacks of nostalgia, and that the challenge facing Beijing is to develop a new urban form. "In China, bigness has become the only tool to keep pace with the fast developments," Neville Mars, a Dutch architect in Beijing, said to me. "The European model of urbanization is outdated, and China proves it. Beijing is a scattered city—how can we patch it back together? The Chinese appear to be in control, but it is really moving too fast for anyone."

Still, developers have lately begun to grasp the appeal that older buildings have, at least for the rapidly growing professional class. SOHO China, a marketing company that established itself with huge modern residential and commercial complexes in Beijing, is now at work on a retail complex, at Qianmen, just south of Tiananmen Square, that will be built around preserved and reconstructed sections of a *hutong*—a kind of Beijing version of Boston's Faneuil Hall. Zhang Xin, who, with her husband, Pan Shiyi, controls SOHO, told me, "So much has been destroyed. Now what excites me is keeping what is left." But often what's left isn't much, and most of the new complex will have to be built from scratch. Zhang said, "Chinese people don't like anything old—they want everything new. If someone came from the moon, they would think this is a newer country than America." She paused. "Maybe that is what Mao wanted," she said. ◆

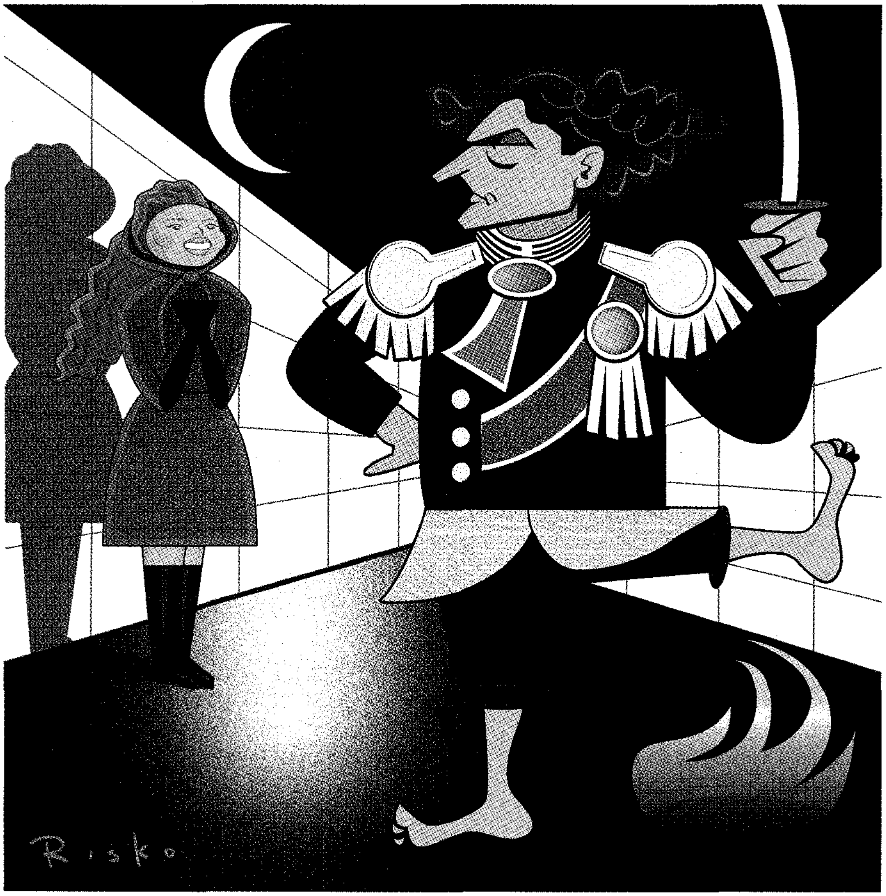
THE THEATRE

INDECISION 2008

The Public Theatre's "Hamlet."

BY JOHN LAHR

At the finale of "Hamlet," most of the main characters lie either poisoned or stabbed to death, scattered around the palace hall like so many toppled chairs. Horatio is left to tell the tale to the conquering Fortinbras, who enters upstage and surveys the carnage. By dying, after three hours of dithering, Hamlet has finally asserted his manhood, purged the corrupt court, and revenged his father's murder. In the current Public Theatre production (at the Delacorte, under the direction of Oskar Eustis), however, Hamlet isn't borne offstage, as the script suggests, in a hero's stately exit. Instead, when, in the play's last line, Fortinbras calls for a cannonade to honor Hamlet—"Go, bid the soldiers shoot"—his lieutenant whips out a pistol and kills Horatio. This is a first! Fortinbras then stamps out the eternal flame that pays tribute to the murdered king's memory. What is going on? Is this the end of history? Of storytelling? Are we on "Candid Camera"? The play, which begins with a conundrum—"Who's there?"—now ends with one. The state of Denmark is delivered, it would seem, into tyranny, not justice. This arbitrary moment of bewildering violence is, unfortunately, the evening's one and only scenic shock; instead of an existentialist Hamlet, a Freudian Hamlet, a Christian Hamlet—all legitimate interpretations—Eustis leaves us with the one kind of Hamlet that the Prince himself would have inveighed against: a melodramatic one.



Get thee to a nunnery: Ambrose, as Ophelia, and Stuhlbarg, as Hamlet, at the Delacorte.

ROBERT RISKO

The story of Hamlet predates Shakespeare's version; a bloodier, more action-packed "Hamlet" existed, probably written by Thomas Kyd. The sophistication of Shakespeare's play lies in the way it teases and exploits the earlier play, along with the ranting tropes of Elizabethan melodrama in general. Then, as now, melodrama imposed simplicity on complexity; every action inspired a satisfying reaction. Shakespeare's Hamlet does the reverse: in his life, the rules of cause and effect do not seem to apply; a university student summoned back to the court, he is paralyzed by thought. Hamlet's capacity for ambiguity and for ratiocination were a novelty to Elizabethan audiences. By making his hero refuse to act, Shakespeare hit on both a brilliant psychological predicament and a structural innovation in a genre that had pandered to the public's appetite for blood and bombast. He ingeniously forestalled the thrill of retribution, substituting psychological suspense for physical excitement. This was a major narrative discovery: action withheld could be as tense and dramatic as action itself.

As it is, when Hamlet does "drink hot blood" and get down to the business of murder, he turns out to be clownishly inept. He murders the wrong man; this, in turn, leads to the suicide of his girlfriend; and when he finally kills the right man, pouring the poison down Claudius's throat, he does so in confused circumstances. Shakespeare fulfills the genre's requirement for violence, but in a new way; irony becomes the antidote to histrionics, enforcing an intellectual detachment that echoes Hamlet's lecture to the travelling players. "O, it offends me to the soul to see a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise," he says.

In a sense, the Public's outdoor productions should be judged as a kind of street theatre. The wide stage and the absence of subtle lighting and sound favor the presentational. ("The Pirates of Penzance," "The Threepenny Opera," Savion Glover's "Dancing Under the Stars," "Henry V" are previous garish, gregarious Delacorte successes.) But for plays that, like "Hamlet," have a complex internal life, the open-air space is a challenge, dissipating energy and focus. Here the problem is one of both penetration and presentation. Eustis, who is the Public's artistic director, can make the play an event; he just can't seem to make much meaning out of it. From the outset, the play's moral argument and its emotional climate are off-kilter. As it begins, we are presented not with the eerie atmosphere of metaphysical uncertainty raised by the sentinels calling out into the chill, impenetrable night but with the certainty of Hamlet (Michael Stuhlbarg) arriving home, in cinematic fashion, with a rose and a valise in hand, to mourn at the tomb of his murdered father. (You almost expect to see a decal for Wittenberg U. on the side of his suitcase.) Eustis just doesn't seem to be in contact with the poetic, hysterical core of the play. He can't make visceral the spooked connection between Hamlet's brooding and his capering. The sense of haunting, central to Shakespeare, is only notional here. The appearance of the Ghost (Jay O. Sanders) is staged with none of the awesome, terrifying psychological overtones that the part suggests. Later, out of his kingly regalia and slumped in black pajamas at the edge of Gertrude's bed, the Ghost is a listless, barely acknowledged part of the Freudian nightmare that Hamlet acts out with his mother.

As Hamlet, Stuhlbarg is more manic than melancholy. He speaks Shakespeare's iambics expertly, picking his way through the thickets of metaphor with admirable precision, so that we are very clear about what's on Hamlet's turbulent mind. And, in this production, Hamlet's "unprevailing woe" doesn't prevail for too long; it morphs into an antic masquerade that both inspires courage and keeps grief at bay. Stuhlbarg, who is slight, swift, and smart, is a cute Hamlet: not so much an avatar of style ("the glass of fashion and the mould of form") as the quintessence of unboundaried adolescence. By turns fragile, furious, and fun, his Hamlet works the audience, twirls his sword, sticks out his tongue at the murdered Polonius, even kicks up his heels after scoring a hit in his fatal duel with Laertes. Saxo Grammaticus, in his history of the Danes, gives the probable origin of Hamlet's name as "fool"; Stuhlbarg's vivacious attack gets to the heart of that etymology.

As the production canters through the plot points, the corruption of the court is referred to but not conveyed. Although Andre Braugher's Claudius exudes a certain hefty command, he has no insinuating political cunning. And, as Gertrude, Margaret Colin flounders. At her moment of highest drama—Polonius slaughtered before her eyes, Hamlet breaking down and almost raping her—she stands apart, nonplussed, wiping the hair out of her eyes. If this staging is meant to suggest something about the nature of denial or the opaque seductiveness in the mother-son relationship, it was lost on me; Colin's neutrality felt more like a lack of directorial attention. Lauren Ambrose, as Ophelia, fares better: she catches the girl's openhearted affection for Hamlet and her deracinating hurt at his capricious rejection. In an inspired choice, the "fennel" and the "columbine" she hands out in her dementia are the stones with which she'll fill her pockets to drown herself. The actors who come across best here are those whose set pieces more or less stand alone. Dressed in a blue suit and crimson tie, Sam Waterston, as a buttoned-down, blathering Polonius, doesn't miss a prolix laugh. "I will be brief," he says after seven lines. "Your noble son is mad."

In "Julius Caesar," the tragedy that Shakespeare wrote before "Hamlet," Brutus says, "Between the acting of a dreadful thing / And the first motion, all the interim is / Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream." "Hamlet" is that hideous dream. Eustis's production has a fine behemoth puppet show to catch the conscience of the king, an imposing, streamlined Elsinore, designed by David Korins, and a handful of seasoned players; what it doesn't have is an instinct or an eye for making a spectacle of the frenzied distortion of nightmare. ♦

THE WILD WEST

From the Grass Valley (Calif.) Union.

A man called from the 16000 block of Oscar Drive saying he thought someone had been inside his residence and canceled his vacation booked online. Nothing else in the residence had been disturbed, he said.

Advertisement

Where Great Gift Ideas Click

The New Yorker's unique advertisers are online. [illegible]

shop TNY

shoptny.com

THE
NEW YORKER
ONLINE
newyorker.com

PODCASTS
newyorker.com/go/podcasts

FICTION
Mary Gaitskill reads Vladimir Nabokov's "Symbols and Signs"

THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL
Dorothy Wickenden hosts a roundtable about the Presidential race

THE NEW YORKER OUT LOUD
A weekly interview. This week: Atul Gawande on an unstoppable itch

COMMENT
Hear the magazine's opening essay

AUDIBLE.COM/NEWYORKER

ON TELEVISION

WORKING GIRL

A British take on the world's oldest profession.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

As befits a show about a woman of the night, "Secret Diary of a Call Girl," an eight-episode blast of summer heat from Showtime that started last week, arrived with something of a reputation. The series was produced in England, and was originally shown there last year. It was based on a book called "The Intimate Adventures of a London Call Girl," which was written by a high-end prostitute and was itself an outgrowth of a blog, called "Belle de Jour: Diary of a London Call Girl," whose success then engendered a newspaper series in the *Telegraph*, called "Belle de Jour's Naughty Notebook," and led to another book, called "The Further Adventures of a London Call Girl." The TV series is now shooting its second season over in England, and has already been renewed for a third. All this enterprise, which is almost Disneyesque in terms of the length of its chain of monetization—the only thing missing is a theme park with kinky rides that cost five hundred dollars an hour—is the product of someone whose identity is open to question. There's been speculation in the British press that Belle, who has never revealed her real name and is now retired, is an impostor—that is, that she was never a prostitute, and may even be a he.

The authority of the diaries is something worth pondering, especially at a time when a number of high-profile memoirs have turned out to be, to some degree or in their entirety, not what they professed to be. Unfortunately, I couldn't find them in the Ho section of my local Barnes & Noble (the subtitle of the American edition, earnest and accurate, is "Diary of an Unlikely Call Girl"), so I've seen only the *Telegraph* columns and short passages from the books. The writing I have come across seems not just fictional but false; there's a lazy archness to the tone, a superficial intelligence, and a mere pose of thoughtfulness—all of which may be intentional, part of the joke. The diaries aren't trying for greatness; they're trying to make the cash register ring, and that they have done. The conceit is that Belle is a university-educated young woman who went to London in search of a job and couldn't make ends meet, and found that being a high-priced escort created the perfect synergy between her desire to make a lot of money and her avowed love of sex. (I know what you're thinking: I wish *I'd* thought of that.) Belle makes it clear that she's not a victim in this situation. She wasn't abused as a child; everyone in her family was too busy reading, apparently. In the *Telegraph*, she offers this bit of background, in which neither the style nor the content passes the smell test: "My parents fancied themselves 1970s revolutionaries so we grew up with unfettered access to the writings of Angela Davis, Germaine Greer et al. The house was stuffed with books of all kinds. Psychedelic sci-fi disguised as literature: Aldous Huxley. The usual classics: Bede, Ivanhoe. My parents claim I taught myself to read, and set about reading everything within reach. Euripides and Plato were bedside standards. Goethe and Grass were favourites."

Issues of authenticity fade away, however, when it comes to the TV series, because it's not at pains to sell itself as the real deal. You don't have to believe that the story comes from a true-life prostitute, just that the character you're watching is believable. Billie Piper, the English actress who plays Belle and whom we last saw a few months ago, on PBS, when she was Fanny in "Mansfield Park," is in her mid-twenties and has been a celebrity in Britain for more than a decade: she was a teen-age pop star; struggled with and recovered from anorexia; married a television presenter nearly twice her age when she was eighteen; triumphed anew as the sidekick in "Doctor Who" (which is seen here on Sci Fi); made her West End début in 2007; and, on the last day of the year, got married for the second time, to a scion of the tony Fox theatrical family. Casting Piper as a prostitute is smart marketing—as an idea, it has a tabloid sizzle. But the sizzle doesn't quite carry across the Atlantic. Here, where we don't feel either maternally protective of Piper or hypercritical of the mistakes she's made in her life (our hands are already full, what with Britney, Lindsay, and Paris), she just doesn't seem substantial enough to sustain a series. She's both too vulnerable-looking to credibly play a yuppie call girl and too limited a performer to be able to convey what the attractions and the costs of that life might be. Piper is self-absorbed and pouty, and has an off-putting signature look: her mouth hangs open almost all the time, sending mixed signals of sexuality and childlike helplessness. Her accent makes her almost as hard to understand as Prince William is: it took me five rewinds to figure out that what she was saying to a client wasn't "Whdijha hleyiek come ihhit?" but "Would you like to come sit?"

It's not that much fun to watch an actress who, except for the occasional times when she lets loose one of her charmingly loud second-soprano laughs, seems always to be asking more of us than she's giving, but "Secret Diary of a Call Girl" does get better as it goes along, although it doesn't greatly distinguish itself from most other shows you've seen about young single women in the big city. (The transformation of Belle's work into a TV show was overseen by the young playwright Lucy Prebble, who, luckily for her, had a success at London's Royal Court when she was just out of university, so she wasn't forced to walk the streets at night in fishnet stockings and a leather miniskirt.) At the end of an episode that involves a foursome and also some personal disappointment, Belle turns to the camera and says, "Sex is really a numbers game. Group sex is complicated, but that's mechanics. For me, the hardest numbers have always been one plus one. Can never seem to make them add up." If that voice sounds familiar, it's because you heard Carrie Bradshaw use it in every episode of "Sex and the City." The show also uses London in somewhat the same way "Sex and the City" used New York—we see a lot of bright lights, fancy restaurants, and expensive apartments—though there is a sadder, more wistful quality to the photography here, as if Belle were living in a kind of London fog, which, of course, she is.

Stripping down to the essentials in "Secret Diary of a Call Girl."

ISTVAN BANYAI

She has an unfulfilled love for her ex-boyfriend, Ben (the very appealing Iddo Goldberg), who is now her best mate but doesn't know what she really does for a living; he and her family think she's a legal secretary who works at night. At the beginning of the first episode, Belle strides across a bridge over the Thames, introducing herself to us. With deliberate bluntness, as if to preëmpt our disapproval, she says, "The first thing you should know about me is that I'm a whore," adding, as she walks into the lobby of a nice hotel, that the best way for someone like her to hide in plain sight is to dress well and not stand out in any way—to be "fabulous but forgettable." Then she says, "You should also know that this isn't the real me." But it *is* the real her; the job has become her whole life. The only aspect of that life that we can truly care about is whether things will work out with Ben. That being the case, "Secret Diary" is at heart just a Laura Ashley romance tricked out in stiletto heels.

If it's legal hot summer sex you're looking for, there's only one place to turn. You guessed it—Canada. SOAPnet is showing a CBC series called "MVP: The Secret Lives of Hockey Wives," which aired earlier this year up north. The opening credits combine funny and sexy better than any show I've ever seen: synched to the propulsive beat of Sloan's 2006 hit "Who Taught You to Live Like That" is a quick succession of *really* closeup shots of gorgeous men getting dressed to play hockey and of gorgeous women getting dressed to go out and get those men who play hockey. The thirty-five-second sequence is as gloriously over-the-top as can be, and no show could live up to it, but "MVP" is a good beach read, so to speak, if you need a break from all that Goethe and Plato. Its template is "Footballers' Wives," the British soap, which was shown here on BBC America, and it also calls to mind such past treasures as "Dynasty" and almost every other nighttime soap you can think of. I had no idea that hockey had its groupies—"puck bunnies"—or that hockey players were anything but giant battery-operated throw pillows under their uniforms. I'm going to sit right down and send Canada a thank-you note. ♦

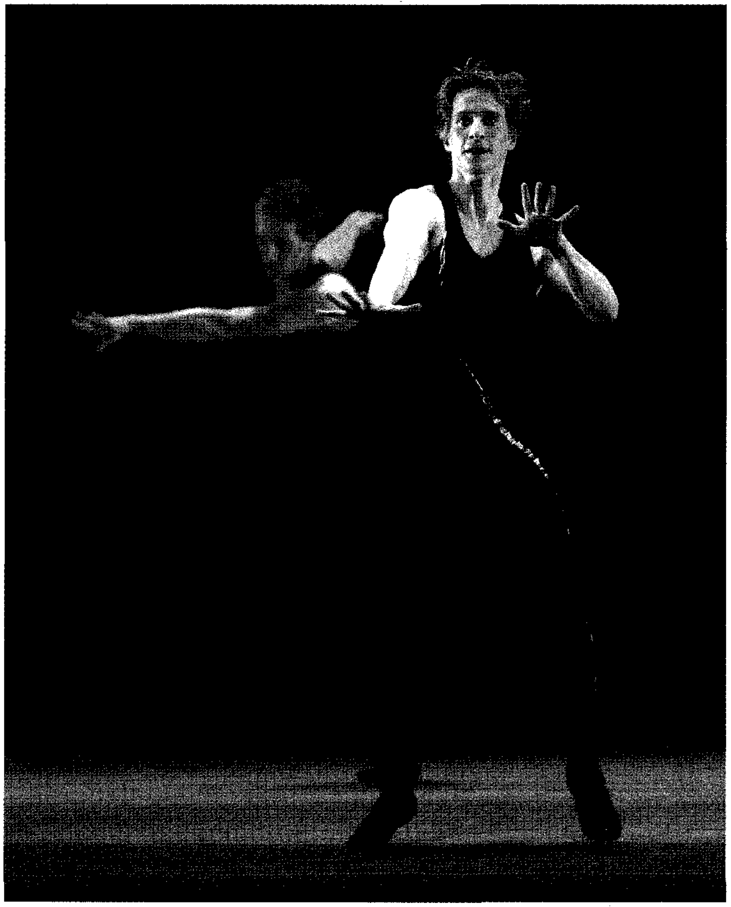
DANCING

GUY STUFF

Twyla Tharp at American Ballet Theatre.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

For the past two decades or so, Twyla Tharp has tended, in her new dances, to recycle features of her earlier successes, but in “Rabbit and Rogue,” which just had its première at American Ballet Theatre, she seems to repeat every single thing that has worked for her before. It’s as if she had made a list and then checked off each strategy as she reused it. Tharp’s last two projects have been failures. Her Bob Dylan musical, “The Times They Are A-Changin’” (2006), closed after just a few weeks on Broadway. Then, earlier this year, she made a piece for Miami City Ballet—“Nightspot,” about Miami club life—that, while it was warmly applauded by the Florida audience I saw it with (it had an Elvis Costello score and lots of red costumes), was actually a desperate-looking mess: a fact that she was probably aware of. In both pieces, Tharp explored a territory relatively new to her—dream, hallucination. It is therefore no surprise that, having had so little luck there, she chose, in her next ballet, to do nothing new to her.



Ethan Stiefel (front) as Rogue in Tharp’s “Rabbit and Rogue.”

ROSALIE O’CONNOR/COURTESY AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE

“Rabbit and Rogue” is led by two men, both of them ballet virtuosos—in the first cast, Ethan Stiefel and Herman Cornejo—who, however, mix their ballet steps with humbler material, at times vaudeville, at other times just guy-guy moves reminiscent of the bowling alley, the batting cage. Joining the two men is a male-female couple making a stab at ballroom dancing. Then there are various squadrons: a quartet, an ensemble of twelve that may break up into fours or sixes or whatever. From minute to minute, these units will enter, either from the side (and then dance to the opposite side) or, spookily, from a sort of blackness at the back of the stage (and then dance forward). Their routines are whiz-bang numbers—witty, acrobatic—and also quite inconclusive, but, what the hell, because here comes another group to entertain you. The units rarely connect, or even notice each other. They are a miscellany, and so are their steps, which, like those of the soloists, represent a great ragbag of styles—jazz, sock-hop, tango, you name it, all laid over a ballet base. The commissioned score, by the film composer Danny Elfman (“Edward Scissorhands,” “Batman”), is a similar jumble, part recorded, part live, part Western orchestra, part gamelan. Toward the end, another element is added: a male-female couple, in ballet costume, performing a pure and decorous ballet number. The program identifies these two as “the gamelan couple,” because they are called forth to the gamelan music, but what they look like are Greek gods alighting, as in a myth, on a busy, crazy world. Throughout “Rabbit and Rogue,” the dancers, mysteriously, change bits of their clothing between entries. To an array of black costumes—gorgeous creations, by Norma Kamali—more and more elements of silver are added. Once we see the gamelan couple, dressed in silver and white, the mystery is solved. This is where the others have been headed: to that couple’s world—ballet, paradise. Accordingly, in the last few minutes of the ballet, the stage is opened to its fullest depth; all the dancers come out, in silver and white, and all of them do unadulterated ballet. Clearly, what we are supposed to see here is an achievement of unity, as opposed to the pluralism that reigned before. We don’t. The unity is just imposed, but it makes for a nice ending.

Even the most casual dancegoer could tell you which prior Tharp works those features come from: the stress on guys, doing street moves and then surprising us with bravura ballet steps (“Movin’ Out,” “Push Comes to Shove”); the inclusion of vaudeville (“Bum’s Rush”); the lateral entries (“Baker’s Dozen”); the dancers materializing from upstage darkness (“Fait Accompli”); the ballroom routine, with fumbles (“Nine Sinatra Songs”); the clothes-changing (“In the Upper Room”); the contrasting of heaven and earth (“The Catherine Wheel,” “How Near

Heaven"); the framing of that difference as a difference between ballet and popular dance ("Deuce Coupe"). I have limited myself to one or two precedents. Believe me, there are more.

Still, it was good to see those Tharpisms again. And, oh, how they pleased the dancers, above all the two male leads, the guys. It is perhaps a disappointment, politically, that America's foremost female choreographer has such an obsession with manliness, and with telling us that men can perform ballet without becoming homosexuals. But Tharp has a point: the movement style associated, in this country, with standard-issue virility—the way men get around on those big, shambly legs of theirs—*is* beautiful, and is rarely featured in ballet. Ethan Stiefel is a peerless example of this sort of relaxed butchness, and in "Rabbit and Rogue," in which he was presumably cast for that trait, he seemed to enter into a sort of ecstasy, where he could do no wrong. The ballet's vaudeville passages belong to Stiefel (Rogue) and Herman Cornejo (Rabbit), who have an older brother-little brother relationship. Cornejo pesters Stiefel; Stiefel chases him away. At one juncture, Stiefel kicked Cornejo into a stage-right wing, looked at us, pointed to the wing ("That guy?"), and wiped his hands ("I'm through with him"). It was a small thing, but it's the moment I remember most clearly from the ballet, because Stiefel's comic timing was so spot-on. As for Cornejo, what Tharp fastened on in him was his astonishing virtuosity. Technically, he is stronger than any other male ballet dancer in the United States—perhaps in the world. He did grands ronds de jambe so high that they practically banged into his nose.

In casting, particularly with men, Tharp will often choose someone who has huge potential but who, because he does not have a perfect ballet body, has not been given the best roles. (Past examples: Richard Colton and John Selya. Present example: Cornejo, who is very short.) She will summon his strengths; he, in gratitude, will turn on the engines. But it's not just neglected men, and not just men. In the first cast of "Rabbit and Rogue," Gillian Murphy was the woman in the ballroom couple, and never have her long limbs had more to do. At one point, when she and her partner were not getting along, she smacked him on the shoulder with her leg, and I don't mean her foot. I mean her calf. Tharp knows how to pick dancers, how to cast them, how to pull out of them everything they have. She even got David Hallberg, Murphy's ballroom partner, to go a little wild—the one quality that, before now, this lovely, correct, and worried-looking man could not muster. How the dancers must love Tharp. They should. She makes them heroes.

So "Rabbit and Rogue," however much it repeated Tharp's old material, earned its place on the stage. Perhaps it's time to rethink the principle that artists shouldn't repeat themselves. It's a new rule. Nobody told Fra Angelico that he should stop painting the Virgin. Only in the early twentieth century, with the advent of modernism, did people start saying that artists should constantly "reinvent" themselves. Implicit in this notion is the belief that with every replay, like every dub of a videotape, there will be a loss of power, of definition. That is true in some cases; Paul Taylor is now working by formula. Conversely, however, when Merce Cunningham sought and found a mechanism that would prevent him from repeating himself—a computer program called Life Forms, which suggested to him movements that he himself could not have imagined—he weakened his work, because those movements were so strange. They looked like something out of a computer.

In the list above, of Tharp's already-used gambits, I didn't include the most obvious one—her fixation on the idea of miscellany (of steps, of groups, of musical elements) as opposed to unity—because this is not really a gambit but the very center of her art, her permanent subject. People who don't like it won't like her. People who do like it should let her go on doing it, and count it for what it is: a serious, long-meditated thought, which I believe is about America (individualism vs. concord), about ballet (awe of it vs. you-don't-own-me), and, by extension, about the past: the rejection of it, the longing for it, and the reabsorption of it—rarely achieved, always hoped for. ♦

Advertisement

SPECIAL OFFER

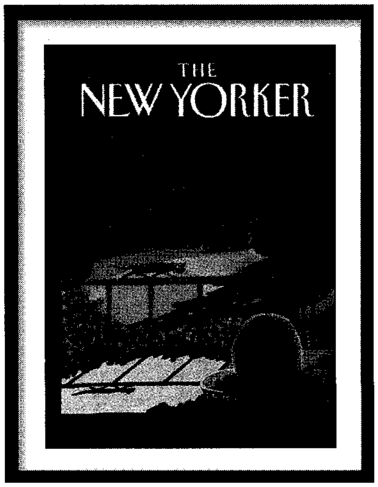
Jean-Jacques Sempé

THE NEW YORKER

"Master of the House"
Published March 12, 2001

We are pleased to present two new limited-edition lithographic cover prints by Jean-Jacques Sempé.

375 prints in each series.
Signed and numbered by the artist.
Available matted or framed: 25" x 31".



"Cat's Night Out"
Published August 8, 2005

To order, call 877-408-4269,
or shop online for free shipping.

newyorkerstore.com

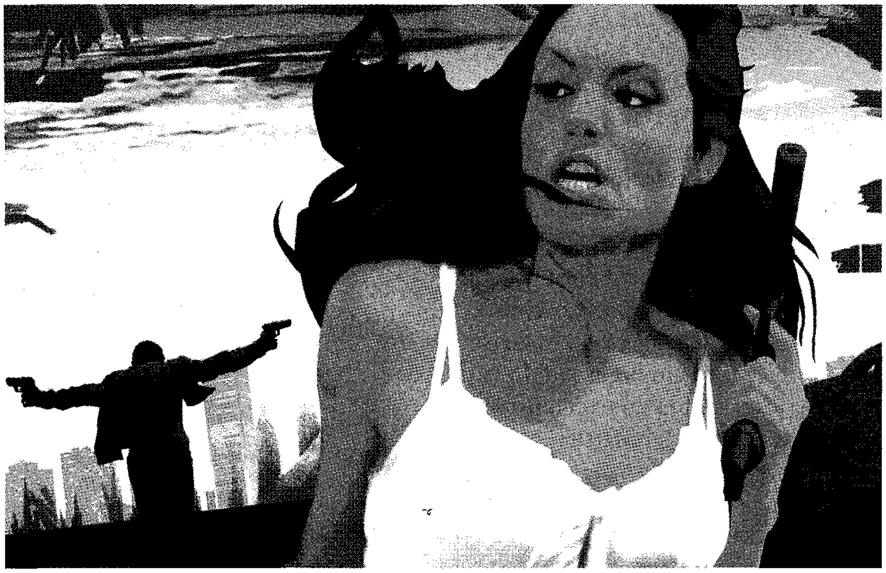
THE CURRENT CINEMA

BIG KILLS

"Wanted" and "The Happening."

BY ANTHONY LANE

What is it like being Timur Bekmambetov? No artist should be confused too closely with his creations, but anybody who sits through "Wanted," Bekmambetov's new movie, will be tempted to wonder if the life style of the characters might not reflect or rub off on that of the director. How, for example, does he make a cup of coffee? My best guess, based on the evidence of the film, is that he tosses a handful of beans toward the ceiling, shoots them individually into a fine powder, leaves it hanging in the air, runs downstairs, breaks open a fire hydrant with his head, carefully directs the jet of water through the window of his apartment, sets fire to the building, then stands patiently with his mug amid the blazing ruins to collect the precious percolated drops. Don't even think about a cappuccino.



Angelina Jolie as Fox, a member of an ancient order of assassins.

JOHN RITTER

The great thing about Bekmambetov is that even the mildest of devices spur him into helpless exaggeration. "Wanted" begins with a flashback, but not for him the gentle glance over the past month, or the childhood cameo; instead, up comes the dauntless title "1000 years ago." One day, presumably a wet Thursday, a secret society of medieval weavers suddenly decided to create an even more secret society of global assassins. This was done, apparently, to maintain "the balance of the world," a principle reiterated later in the film, but the episode leaves you panting to know more. Why weavers? Why not potters, or pastry cooks? Until now, I never made the connection between haberdashery and homicide, but "Wanted" is determined to prove the link, and viewers will certainly think twice before joining their local knitting circle. Mind you, we never discover who orders the kills: it could be governments, businessmen, or bishops. Is the whole film no more than totalitarian housecleaning posing as democratic do-gooding, and, if so, who will screen it for Vladimir Putin?

We now leap a thousand years to Chicago, or, at any rate, to an outsider's overheated fabrication of the city. Bekmambetov was born in the Soviet Union, and this is his first film set in the United States, but "Wanted" never feels solidly American, and not just because James McAvoy keeps slipping into his native Scottish. He plays Wesley Gibson, who loathes his existence. Given that it involves both accountancy and cuckoldry, he may have a point, and the twitchy Gibson is the heir of a hundred other movie mice, headed by Jack Lemmon in "The Apartment." Bekmambetov, however, is simply unable, or unwilling, to let such quiet desperation sink in. Instead, he pumps up the sound (the click of a stapler resounds like a rivet gun) and stuffs his camera into people's faces for the sake of a bulging closeup. This is the filmmaking equivalent of prodding someone in the chest with a forefinger as you're telling a joke, and it means that the tone remains the same, at yelping level, when Gibson's life is changed. A pity, because it's quite a shift; one moment he's waiting alone in a grocery store, and the next Angelina Jolie is standing by his side. End of mousehood.

Ms. Jolie is, I am pleased to report, in splendid form. Watch her as she runs along the top of a speeding train and, approaching a tunnel, lies back like a sunbather and lets the roof of it swoosh over her, basking in the satisfaction of a near-miss and, by extension, in the world's unflagging worship of her cool. "Get away from me," McAvoy shouts to her at one point, and she gives an ineffable smile, charmed by the absurdity of the request. You don't tell Angelina Jolie to go away; she tells you. In "Wanted," she plays Fox, one of the fraternity of killers, who informs Gibson that his father was the doyen of the group, that he was wiped out only the day before by a rogue operator, and that he, weedy Wesley, must learn the ropes and avenge this foul, unnatural crime. Hamlet was under the same obligation, but, lacking access to high-powered rifles and exploding rats, he took longer to finish the job.

Gibson is introduced to the chief assassin, Sloan (Morgan Freeman), who teaches him how to bend a bullet in mid-flight. "Let your instincts guide you," he advises, having clearly enjoyed his time at the Obi-Wan Kenobi School of Karmic Weaponhood. To achieve a satisfactory bend, you have to whip the pistol round like a discus thrower, a skill soon perfected by our hero. As nonsense goes, this has a certain gusto and glee, and what dismayed me was that Bekmambetov felt the need to spice it with the addition of coarsely chopped violence. What looks set to be a boyish, pop-eyed fantasy—if Angelina Jolie kicks out your windshield and asks you to take the wheel while she sprawls on your hood and shoots at the vehicle behind, you can hardly refuse—warps into a welter of bloodletting. The knife work is especially cruel, and it puts parents into a quandary: their teen-age kids are the ideal (probably the sole) consumers of this loud, silly dream about a furtive brotherhood, but they are also precisely the wrong people to be told that stabbing is a talent to be envied, and, worse still, that its effects wear off in a nice hot bath. As foreheads burst asunder, and as Gibson caps the mayhem by firing repeatedly through the back of a dead man's head, I wanted to ask: Is this the true legacy of "Pulp Fiction"—that the fiction would lose all credibility and make way for actual human pulp?

Halfway through "The Happening," as the movie began to splutter, I realized what M. Night Shyamalan needs more than anything else. He needs Val Lewton. To anyone toiling in genre movies during the Second World War, Lewton was a godsend: a fixer, a fabled storyteller, and the kind of guy who gives producers a good name and stops directors from getting a bad one. Born in Yalta, he wound up as the head of horror—now *there's* one for the résumé—at R.K.O. in 1942, where he produced films such as "The Ghost Ship," "The Body Snatcher," "Cat People," and the unambiguously titled "I Walked with a Zombie." The last two were directed by the energetic Jacques Tourneur, but even with lesser talents Lewton proved himself the nonpareil of atmosphere and zip. Too much of the first, as he saw, and the tale clogs up; too much of the second, and you leave the horror behind.

If Shyamalan's need for such guidance seems more urgent than ever, it may be because "The Happening" is an eco-drama, and that, I regret to say, is a contradiction in terms. Environmental catastrophe is a clear and present danger, but, if you're a head-scratching screenwriter, it's not a patch on the Red Menace. To be fair, for the first twenty minutes Shyamalan finds a regular rhythm of shock: people in Central Park, and then in the surrounding blocks, start to halt in their tracks, like robots on strike, and take their own lives with whatever comes to hand—a firearm, a high building, a prong being used as a hair clip. As the story spreads, and the action moves from New York to Philadelphia, from town to countryside, and from crowd to gaggle, we slowly realize that greenery has gone toxic: trees, grass, and plants are wafting death into our brains.

The response to Shyamalan's film has been almost shrublike in its venom, and there is no denying that his ear for dialogue appears to be overgrown with moss. The performances, too, are weirdly stunted: normally reliable actors like Mark Wahlberg, John Leguizamo, and Zooey Deschanel—playing, respectively, a science teacher, a math teacher, and a worried wife, all fleeing the leafy threat—stalk through the action with a mixture of grimaces, goofiness, and what I charitably read as indigestion rather than catatonia. To be honest, I would be perfectly happy to walk with a zombie after ninety minutes of this; it would feel like light relief. Nevertheless, movies every bit as stumbling as "The Happening," and far more savage, come out every month, and few are greeted with such contempt. Why should this be?

My suspicion is that Shyamalan, despite everything, still gets under people's skin, and that their mockery is a way of saying it ain't so. He is plainly obsessive—that is not just the source of his appeal but the prelude to his follies—and we are made uneasy and embarrassed by obsession. (The same problem arises in Michael Powell films.) I have always taken Shyamalan to be a fearmonger, but the new film suggests that he may be, at heart, a morbidologist: he is trying to reinsert the fear of death into a moviegoing culture that would prefer to think of it as laughable, dismissible, or gross. People around me in the cinema were cackling at some of the suicides in "The Happening," but self-annihilation, and the host of motives that can spur us toward it, is no joke. Those who punish a filmmaker for the crime of humorlessness are the same audiences who go tense and quiet on the rare occasions when, as Shyamalan did in "The Sixth Sense," he makes sombre and controlled use of the same anxieties. "The Happening" is an awful letdown, yet it leaves you with something new, as a gently waving tree—that classical image of pastoral tranquillity—mutates into a harbinger of doom. It's the first time I've seen that, and I guess it won't be the last. ♦

THE NEW YORKER IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF ADVANCE MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS INC. COPYRIGHT ©2008 CONDÉ NAST PUBLICATIONS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

VOLUME LXXXIV, NO. 19, June 30, 2008. THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028792X) is published weekly (except for five combined issues: February 11 & 18, June 9 & 16, July 7 & 14, August 11 & 18, and December 22 & 29) by Condé Nast Publications, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: The Condé Nast Building, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. Drew Schutte, vice-president and publishing director; David Miller, associate publisher; Terese Cunningham, advertising director; Norman M. Miller, advertising director; Maria Tenaglia, advertising director; Suzanne Reinhardt, director of finance and business operations; Daniella Wells, associate publisher of creative services and marketing; Jacqueline Cinguina, executive director of marketing and integrated strategy; Alice McKown, executive director, creative services; John Rice, executive creative development director; Lynn Oberlander, general counsel. Condé Nast Publications: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Charles H. Townsend, president and C.E.O.; John W. Bellando, executive vice-president and C.O.O.; Debi Chirichella Sabino, senior vice-president and C.F.O.; Jill Bright, executive vice-president/human resources. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. 123242885-RT0001. Canada Post: return undeliverable Canadian addresses to P.O. Box 874, Station Main, Markham, ON L3P 8L4.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE NEW YORKER, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684. FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADDRESS CHANGES, ADJUSTMENTS, OR BACK ISSUE INQUIRIES: Please write to The New Yorker, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684, call (800) 825-2510, or e-mail subscriptions@newyorker.com. Please give both new and old addresses as printed on most recent label. First copy of new subscription will be mailed within four weeks after receipt of order. For advertising inquiries, please call Terese Cunningham at (212) 286-2105. For submission guidelines, please refer to our Web site, www.newyorker.com. Address all editorial, business, and production correspondence to The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. For cover reprints, please call (800) 897-8666, or e-mail covers@cartoonbank.com. For permissions and reprint requests, please call (212) 630-5656 or fax requests to (212) 630-5883. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. The New Yorker's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. Visit us online at www.newyorker.com. To subscribe to other Condé Nast magazines, visit www.condenet.com. Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services that we believe would interest our readers. If you do not want to receive these offers and/or information, please advise us at P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684 or call (800) 825-2510.

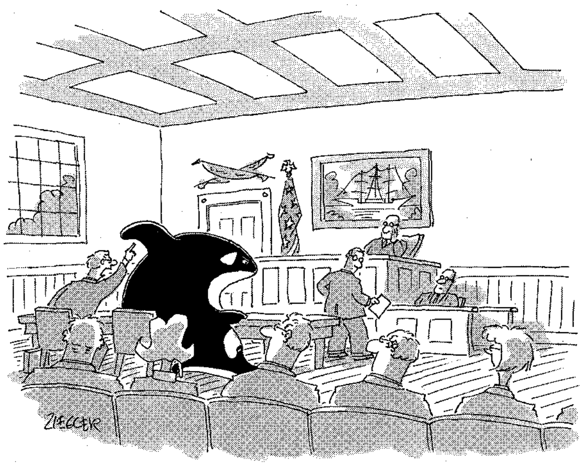
THE NEW YORKER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RETURN OR LOSS OF, OR FOR DAMAGE OR ANY OTHER INJURY TO, UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS, UNSOLICITED ART WORK (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, DRAWINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND TRANSPARENCIES), OR ANY OTHER UNSOLICITED MATERIALS. THOSE SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ART WORK, OR OTHER MATERIALS FOR CONSIDERATION SHOULD NOT SEND ORIGINALS, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED TO DO SO BY THE NEW YORKER IN WRITING.

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS MAGAZINE

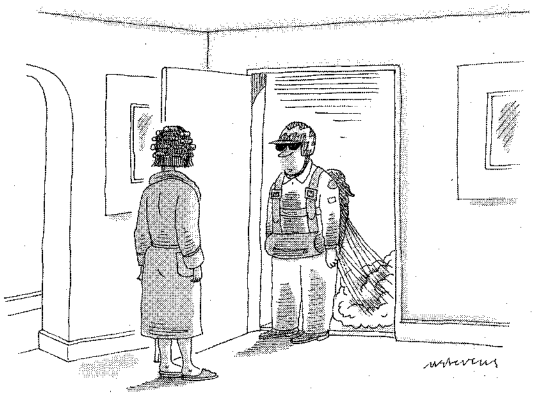
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Tom Cheney, must be received by Sunday, June 29th. Finalists in the June 9th & 16th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the July 21st issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Objection, Your Honor! Alleged killer whale."
Will Simon, Brooklyn, N.Y.



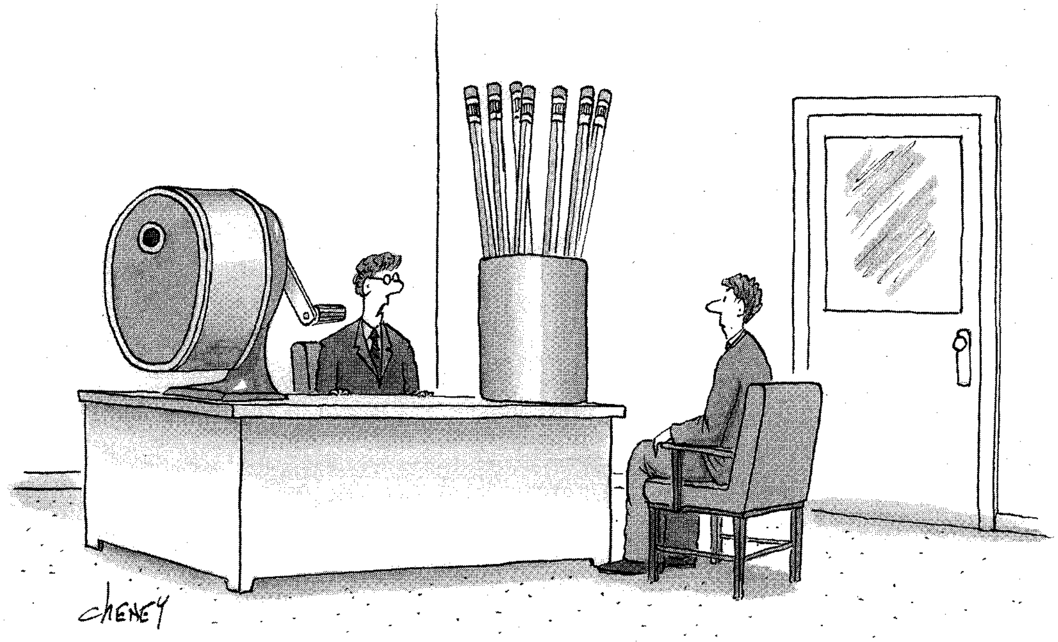
THE FINALISTS

"Can I borrow your Cessna?"
Michael Embley, Austin, Texas

"Are you sure you're ovulating now?"
Natalie O'Connell, City Island, N.Y.

"Apparently, American now charges extra for landings."
Steve Hoglund, Auburn, Wash.

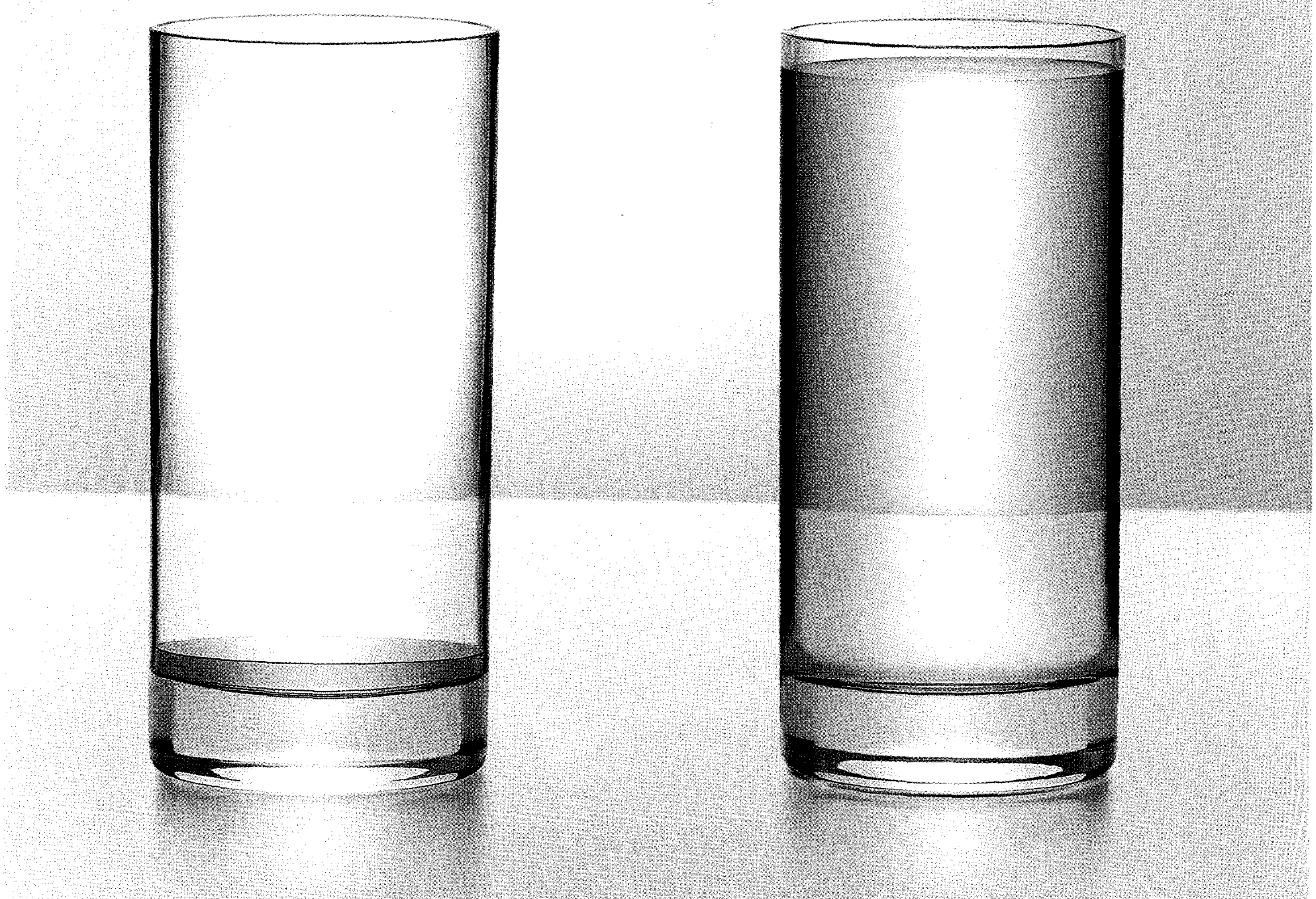
THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



“ ”

Simple Truth: Investment costs count

The lower the costs **the more you keep.**

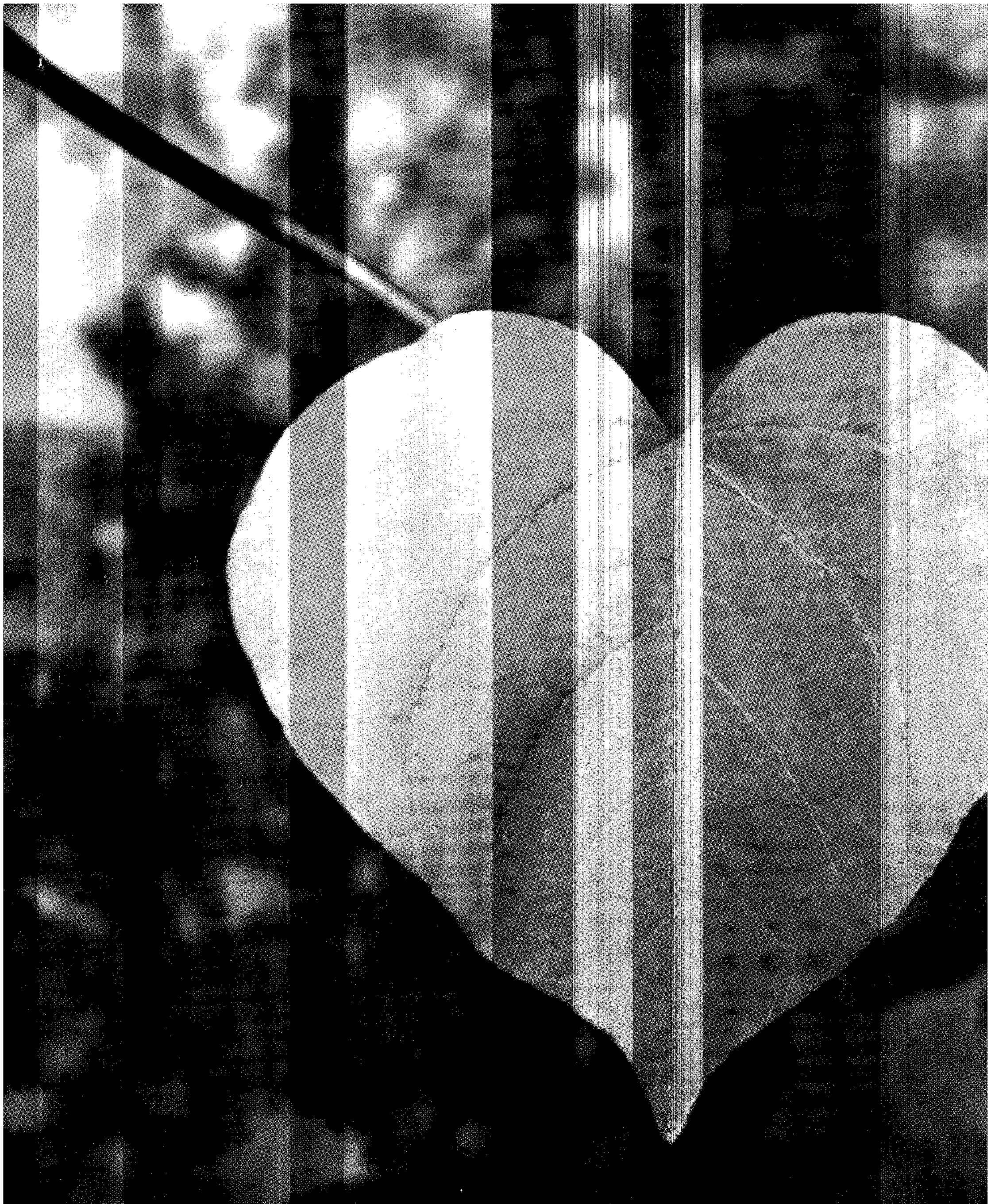


Many investment firms call themselves low cost. But, the truth is, many of them charge about six times as much as Vanguard.* This can cost you thousands of dollars. For instance, over twenty years, if you invest $10,000 a year with an average return of 8% before expenses, you would keep about $58,000 more with the Vanguard fund! And the longer you invest, the greater the savings. It's your money. Keep more of it. Vanguard. The simple truth about investing.**

www.vanguard.com

Vanguard®

Visit www.vanguard.com, or call 877-527-4941, to obtain a prospectus, which includes investment objectives, risks, charges, expenses, and other information; read and consider it carefully before investing. Investments are subject to market risk. *Source: Lipper Inc. as of 12/31/2007. **Based on 2007 industry average expense ratio of 1.22% and Vanguard average expense ratio of 0.20%. Hypothetical example does not represent any particular investment. Simple Truth, The simple truth about investing, Vanguard, and the ship logo are trademarks of The Vanguard Group, Inc. ©2008 The Vanguard Group, Inc. All rights reserved. Vanguard Marketing Corporation, Distributor.



Everyone can appreciate technologies that go from gas-frie

That's why Chevy™ offers eight models with an EPA estimated 30 MPG highway or better[1] plus m
than any brand that can run on cleaner-burning, mostly renewable E85 ethanol.[2] It's also wh
Malibu® Hybrid[3] and Tahoe® Hybrid[4] – America's first full-size hybrid SUV.[5] And why we've pu
engineering resources in place to make Concept Chevy Volt™[6] – our extended-range electric vehi
technology everyone can appreciate. Find out more at chevy.com

AN AMERICAN REVOL